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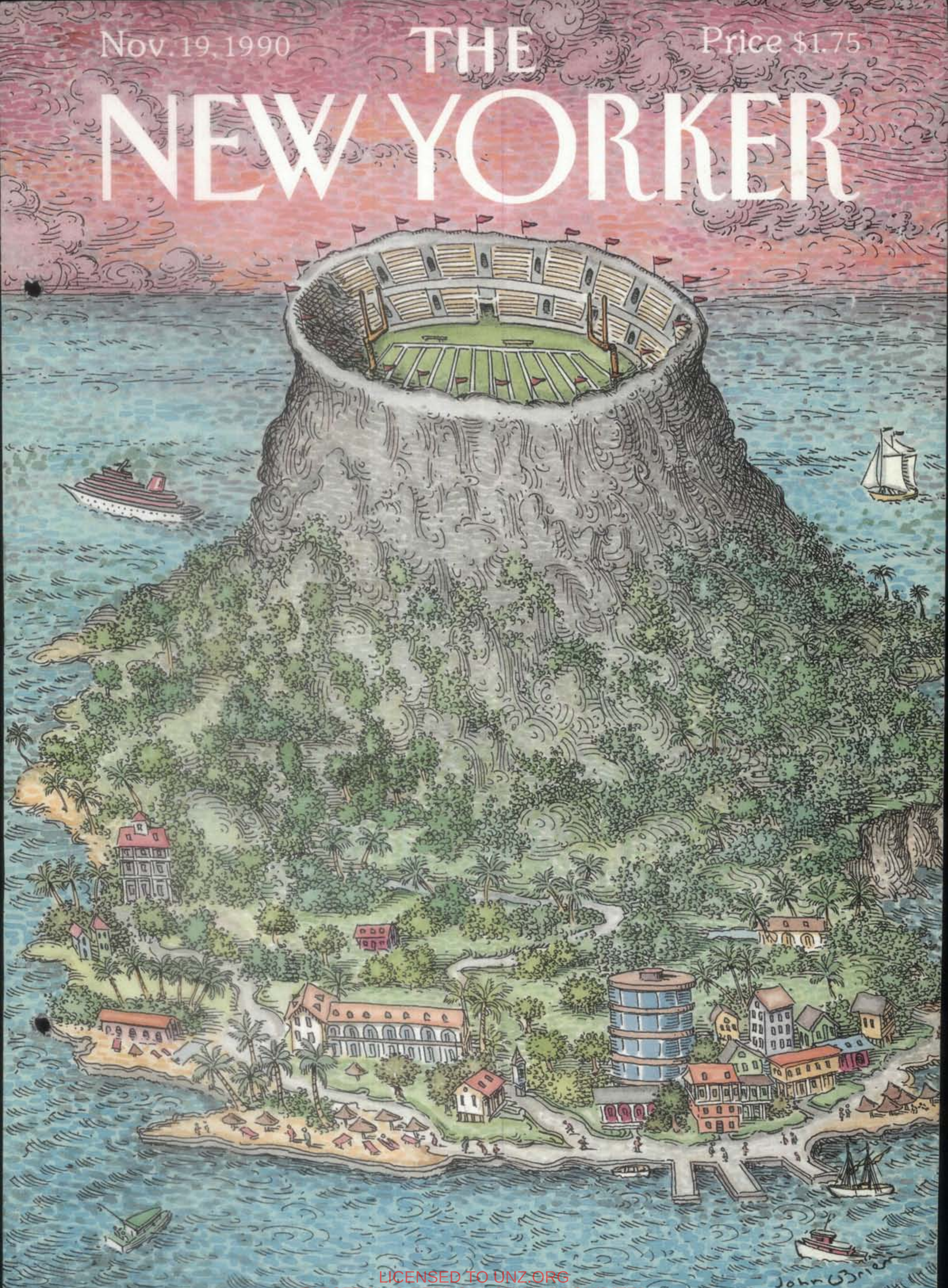
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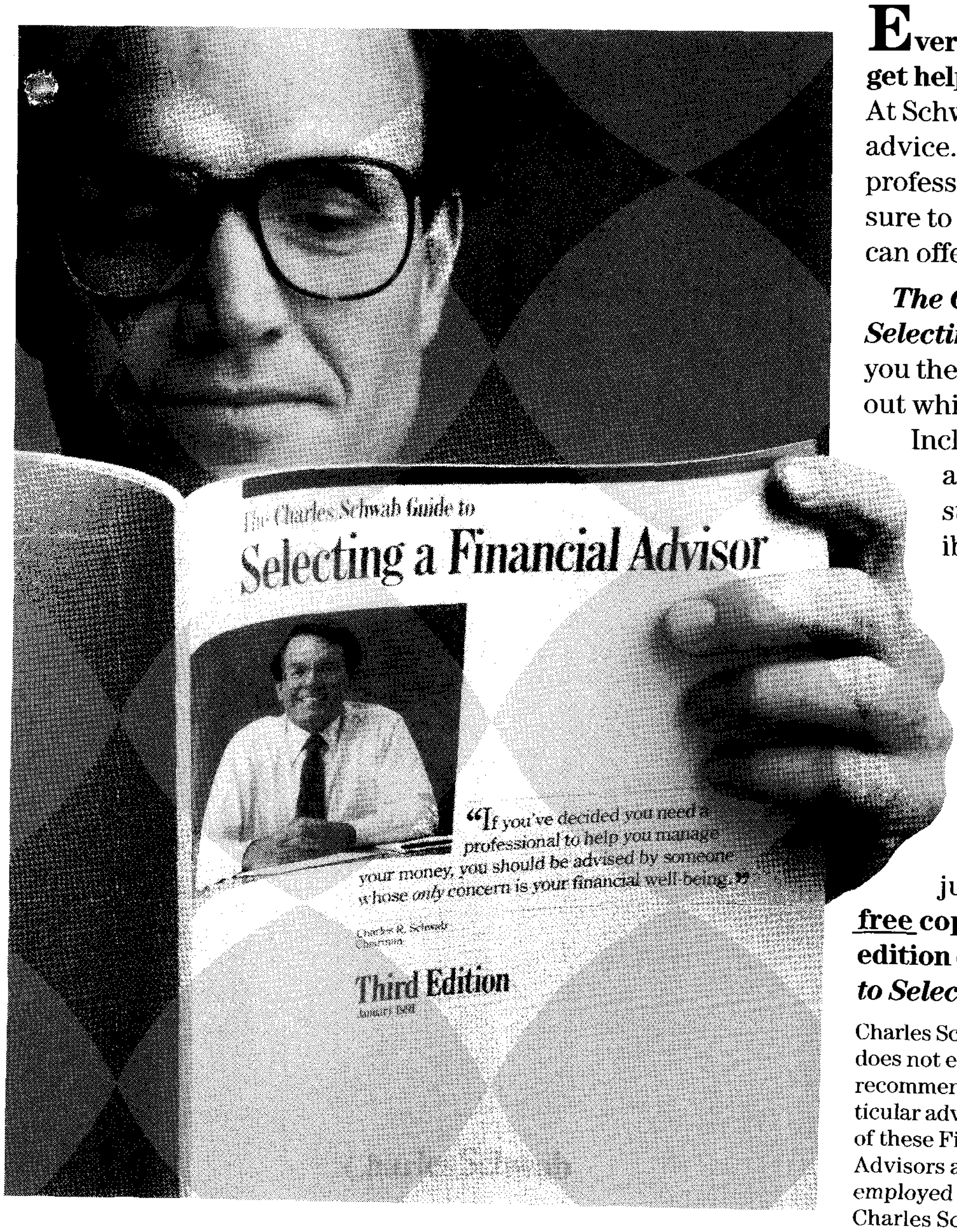
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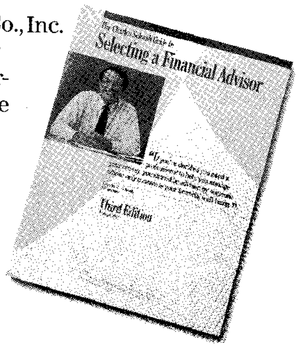
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOVEMBER 19, 1990

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 4
THE TALK OF THE TOWN 43
"DISCOVER TARONIA" . . . . . *Polly Frost* 49
"THE END OF VANDALISM" . . . . . *Tom Drury* 50
"I WAKE ALONE" (POEM) . . . . . *Camillo Sbarbaro* 52
A REPORTER AT LARGE (CZECHOSLOVAKIA) . . . . . *Janet Malcolm* 56
"THE RED DRESS" (POEM) . . . . . *Vickie Karp* 58
"GIVEAWAY" (POEM) . . . . . *Kathleen Norris* 80
AMERICAN CHRONICLES (NEW YORK CITY) . . . . . *Calvin Trillin* 107
THE THEATRE . . . . . *Edith Oliver, Mimi Kramer* 119
THE ART WORLD . . . . . *Adam Gopnik* 120
THE CURRENT CINEMA . . . . . *Pauline Kael* 127
DEPARTMENT OF AMPLIFICATION . . . . . *Paul Brodeur* 134
BOOKS . . . . . *Judith Thurman* 151
  BRIEFLY NOTED 155

COVER: *John O'Brien*

DRAWINGS: *Robert Mankoff, James Stevenson, George Price, Edward Sorel, William Hamilton, Edward Frascino, Robert Weber, Edward Koren, Jack Ziegler, J. B. Handelsman, Victoria Roberts, Michael Crawford, Richard Cline, William Steig, Danny Shanahan, Lee Lorenz, Mort Gerberg, Dana Fradon, Tom Cheney*

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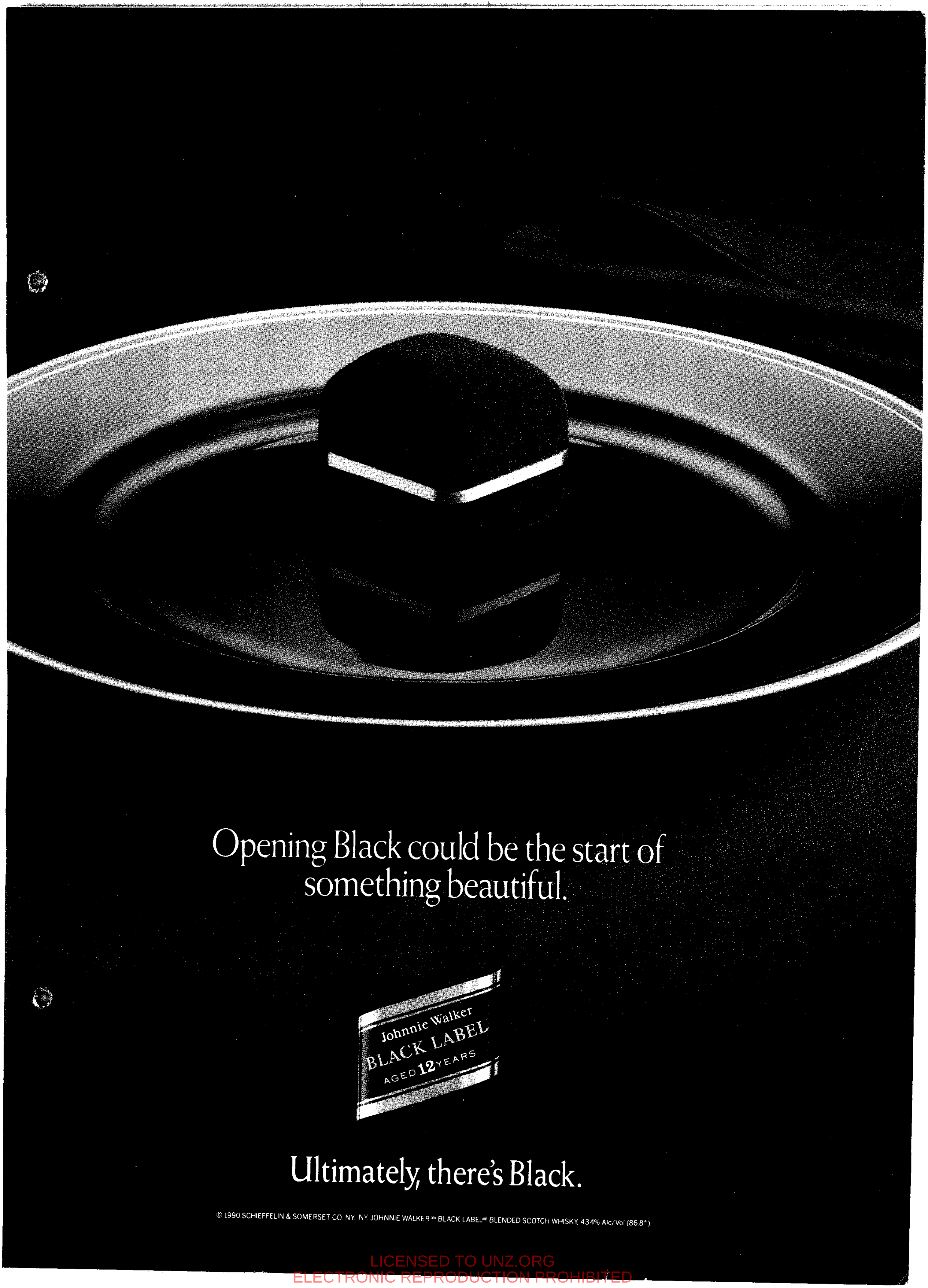
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

WE got a phone call the other day from Suzanne Weber, at Symphony Space, telling us that on November 27 at 8 the noted literary critic Harold Bloom and the poet David Rosenberg—Bloom's collaborator on his new best-seller, "The Book of J"—would discuss their inspired and controversial translation/reinterpretation of what used to be called the Bible. Ms. Weber said that Claire Bloom (no relation) and Fritz Weaver would read parallel passages from "The Book of J" and the King James version. Ms. Weber was calling, she said, to ask our advice about how to publicize the event, as it wasn't quite theatre (even though two such illustrious actors were going to be involved), and yet it wasn't really a mere reading, either.

We chatted awhile with Ms. Weber. She sounded like someone with an extraordinary event on her hands (though difficult to describe), and we decided to publicize it here because: a) we almost never pass up an opportunity to mention Claire Bloom; b) we like the idea that when people don't know whom to call they call us; and c) if we don't, who in God's name will?

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Carnal Knowledge—Jules Feiffer's play, which was made into the 1971 movie. The cast includes Justine Bateman and Judd Nelson. Directed by Martin Charnin. Previews through Nov. 18. Opens Nov. 19 at 6:45. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

Catch Me If I Fall—A musical by Barbara Schottenfeld. Opens Nov. 12 at 6:30. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

The Caucasian Chalk Circle—Brecht's play, adapted by Thulani Davis from a translation by William Spiegelberger and directed by George C. Wolfe. With Charlayne Woodard, Reggie Montgomery, Novella Nelson, and Kevin Jackson, among others. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

The Fever—A one-man play written by, and starring, Wallace Shawn. Previews begin Nov. 17. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7105.)

Fiddler on the Roof—Topol heads the cast in a revival of the 1964 musical by Joseph Stein (book), Jerry Bock (score), and Sheldon Harnick (lyrics). Direction and choreography are based on Jerome Robbins' original. Previews through Nov. 17. Opens Nov. 18 at 6:30. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510.)

Grotesque Love Songs—A play by Don Nigro, with Felicity Huffman, Sally Kirkland, and Chad Lowe. Directed by Kenneth Elliott. Opens Nov. 13 at 8. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

I Stand Before You Naked—A new play by Joyce Carol Oates. In previews. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

King Lear—Hal Holbrook has the title role in this production of Shakespeare's tragedy, which was directed by Gerald Freedman. Previews Nov. 13-14. Opens Nov. 15 at 8. (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883.)

Lake No Bottom—A new play by Michael Weller, with Daniel Davis, Robert Knepper, and Marsha Mason. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

The March on Russia—Bethel Leslie and John Carpenter in a play by David Storey. Opens Nov. 12 at 7. (Chelsea Stage, 441 W. 26th St. 760-9810.)

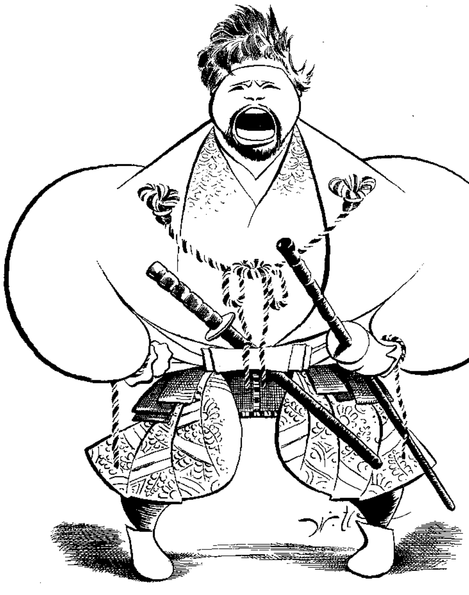
Monster in a Box—Spalding Gray's latest autobiographical monologue. Preview on Nov. 13. Opens Nov. 14 at 7. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21			

Shogun: The Musical—Based on the novel by James Clavell. June Angela, Philip Casnoff, and Francis Ruivivar lead the cast. John Driver wrote the book and the lyrics and Paul Chihara the score. Previews Nov. 13-14. Opens Nov. 15 at 6:30. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102.)

RECENTLY OPENED

Abundance—A play by Beth Henley, with Tess Harper and Amanda Plummer. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/12/90.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Closes Nov. 24.)



Francis Ruivivar in "Shogun: The Musical"

Aspects of Love—Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest extravaganza, based on David Garnett's frail 1955 novel of the same title, aspires to good taste and sophistication (it's about artists and theatre folk rather than cats or trains) but ends up being a monument to vulgarity. The combination of Garnett's triviality and Lloyd Webber's pretentiousness produces something so empty it implodes. (4/23/90) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story—Paul Hipp is the singer in this musical imported from the West End. Directed by Rob Bettinson and written by Alan Janes. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Camille, A Tearjerker—Everett Quinton and the late Charles Ludlam are both at their best in this revival of Mr. Ludlam's 1973 spoof, which gives Mr. Quinton a chance to "play the whore" on a grand scale. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Square. 691-2271.)

Daugherty & Field Off-Broadway—The cabaret team of Bill Daugherty and Robin Field in a limited engagement. (Double Image Theatre, 15 Vandam St. 924-1120.)

Daytrips—A play by Jo Carson, with Barbara Barrie, Beth Dixon, and Helen Stenborg. Directed by Billie Allen. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Falsettoland—This latest installment of a three-part cantata by William Finn (music and lyrics) is a sequel to "In Trousers" and "March of the Falsettos." Mr. Finn's story presents a number of new elements (among them a bar mitzvah in the hospital room of a man who is dying of AIDS) before dissolving in its own syrup. The music sounds agreeable enough, and the performance goes smoothly, under the direction of James Lapine. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

Forever Plaid—Stuart Ross's loving, tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. The performances of Jason Graae, Stan Chandler, David Engel, and Guy Stroman (as the Plaids, a close-harmony group snuffed out in the prime of life and brought back to earth for a single evening) are so deadpan, and the songs (arranged by James Raitt) are rendered at such a heightened pitch of musical good faith, that only from Ross's script and choreography would you know the thing is a parody. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)

I Ought to Be in Pictures—A revival of Neil Simon's 1980 play, presented by the American Jewish Theatre. (Susan Bloch, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

Jackie Mason: Brand New—The comedian brings his act to Broadway again. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Presenting two plays in rotating repertory: Shaw's **misalliance** (through Nov. 23) and Cocteau's **infernal machine.** (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

The Lady from Havana—A play by Luis Santeiro about Cuban exiles in present-day Miami. Directed by Max Ferra. (Intar, 420 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Nov. 25.)

Lettice & Lovage—The marvellous Maggie Smith plays Lettice Douffet, a freewheeling guide to England's stately homes, and the elegant Margaret Tyzack plays a reprimanding envoy sent by Lettice's employers, in Peter Shaffer's merry comedy about an unlikely friendship and other matters. Paxton Whitehead and Bette Henritze are effective in supporting roles. Michael Blakemore was the director. (4/9/90) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Lucky Come Hawaii—A play by Jon Shirota opens the season for the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Closes Dec. 1.)

Machinal—A noisy, blinding revival of Sophie Treadwell's dreary 1928 expressionist play, which was based on the Ruth Snyder murder case. (10/29/90) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Nov. 25.)

Major Barbara—A production of George Bernard Shaw's comedy, directed by Anthony Cornish. (Pearl Theatre, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708.)

The Miser—This tiresome, simpleminded, infantile revival of the Molière classic is an almost total washout saved from ignominy only by a dashing comic turn by John Christopher Jones. The director, Stephen Porter, would seem to have found for the divine Philip Bosco a part he can do nothing with. (10/29/90) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Oh, Kay!—A joyous revival of a musical originally done here in 1926, this time with an all-black (all gifted) company. The score by George Gershwin, with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, and the singing and nimble dancing of the whole company are so glorious that they nearly compensate for the damnable din of amplification. With Brian Mitchell and Angela Teek as the romantic leads, and with fleet-footed Gregg Burge, Kevin Ramsey, and Stanley Wayne Mathis as the principal dancers. (11/12/90) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

Once on This Island—A musical by Lynn Ahrens (book and lyrics) and Stephen Flaherty (score), which is based on Rosa Guy's 1985 novel, "My Love, My Love." Seen last spring at Playwrights Horizons, the show has now moved to Broadway. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Piano Lesson—August Wilson's newest drama, the fourth in his series chronicling the black-American experience in the twentieth century, is set in Pittsburgh, in 1936. In its exquisite writing and over-all structure (involving the conflict over a piano that figures hauntingly and intricately in one family's history) the play resembles "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" more than "Fences." Wilson takes refuge in an overly mystical and melodramatic ending, but there are some great scenes—even if the subtle ensemble acting in Lloyd Richards' production is thrown out of balance by an excessive perfor-

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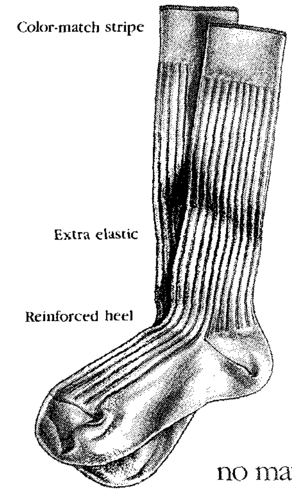
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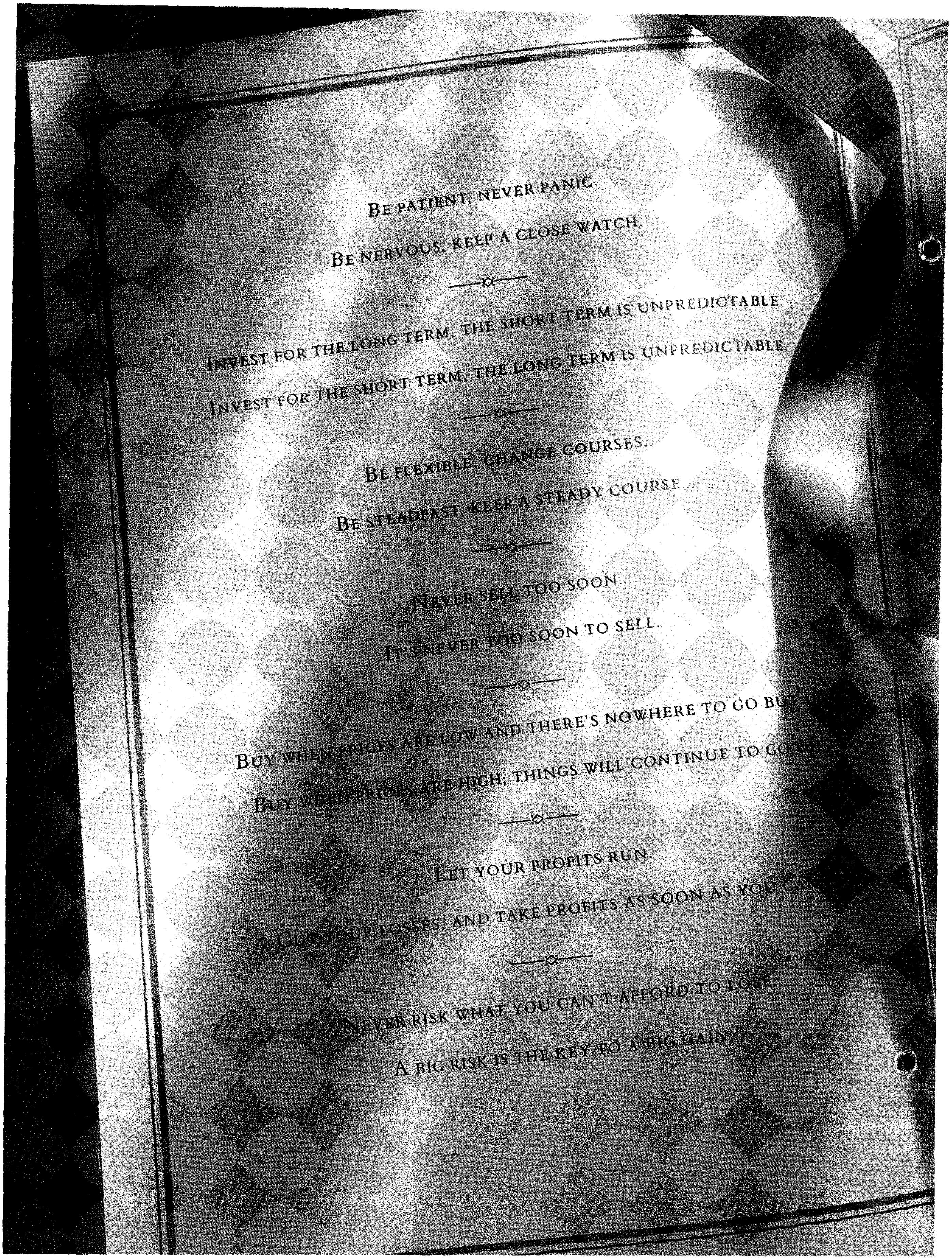

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THE THEATRE—Cont'd

mance by Charles S. Dutton. (4/30/90) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 582-4022.)

The Playboy of the Western World—John Millington Synge's play, presented by the Irish Repertory Theatre. With Patrick Fitzgerald, Ciaran O'Reilly, Madeleine Potter, and Stephen Joyce. (South Street Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Dec. 2.)

Prelude to a Kiss—Craig Lucas's entertaining romantic comedy slips into fantasy when an old man kisses a bride at her wedding. Barnard Hughes is the old man, Ashley Crow is the bride, and John Dossett is the groom. (3/26/90) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.)

The Relapse—A production of Sir John Vanbrugh's play, presented by the Classicworks company. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0390. Closes Nov. 25.)

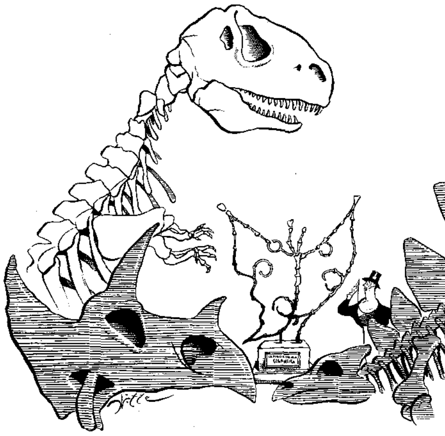
Remembrance—Aideen O'Kelly and Malachy McCourt in the New York première of a play by Graham Reid. Directed by Terry Lamude. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

The Rothschilds—A revival of the 1970 musical by Jerry Bock (score), Sheldon Harnick (lyrics), and Sherman Yellen (book). (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll—Eric Bogosian in a brief reprise of his one-man show, Nov. 16-25. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

Shadowlands—William Nicholson's play about C. S. Lewis and Joy Davidman. With Nigel Hawthorne, who was in the original London production, and Jane Alexander. Staged by Elijah Moshinsky. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

Six Degrees of Separation—You're best off knowing nothing about the new John Guare play, other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright, director Jerry Zaks, and actress Stockard Channing. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. What more do you want? (6/25/90) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)



Smoke on the Mountain—This loving satire of old-time gospel music, set in 1938, is pefectly delightful. Written by Connie Ray (who also performs, along with six other versatile actor-musicians), it re-creates a Saturday-night service at a small church in rural North Carolina, where a family of more or less devout gospel singers have been invited to appear. (Lambs Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Spinoza—A play by the Dutch dramatist Dimitri Frenkel. (Jewish Repertory Theatre, 344 E. 14th St. 505-2667.)

Subfertile—A play by Tom Mardirosian. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Sum of Us—David Stevens' poignant comedy about how hard it is for parents and children to break free of each other (particularly if they get on too well) is set in present-day Australia. Depending on how you look at it, the play is either very dear and rather flawed or rather dear and very flawed; but cast and direction are both excellent, and Tony Goldwyn is electrifying as a young homosexual who wishes his father weren't quite so laid back about his homosexuality. (11/5/90) (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

Those Were the Days—A Yiddish-English musical revue put together by Zalmen Mlotek and Moishe Rosenfeld. (Edison, 240 W. 47th St. 302-2302.)

Twelfth Night—Shakespeare's comedy, presented by the Riverside Shakespeare Company. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 369-2273. Closes Nov. 24.)

The Wash—A play by Philip Kan Gotanda, with Nobu McCarthy, Sab Shimono, and George Takei. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Closes Nov. 18.)

LONG RUNS

BLACK AND BLUE: An evening of classic blues and jazz, conceived, designed, and directed by Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli, who created "Tango Argentino" in a similarly commemorative but far less visually opulent style. Musicians of renown have been assembled, and while La Vern Baker, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith sing, a troupe of hoofers young and old give the tap-dance subculture a workout. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102.) . . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; James Naughton and Gregg Edelman, leading men; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. The plot concerns the making of a private-eye movie (and the unmaking of its author). The spectacular setting and costumes were designed by Robin Wagner and Florence Klotz and lighted by Paul Gallo. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run celebrated its thirtieth birthday last May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **A FEW GOOD MEN:** "Mister Roberts" meets "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Aaron Sorkin's military-courtroom drama treats issues such as justice, honor, loyalty, and morality with the slick, facile smugness of a half-hour comedy series. Directed by Don Scardino. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1990:** A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.) . . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **GYPSY:** This revival of the great Sondheim-Styne-Laurents-Robbins musical (directed by Arthur Laurents himself) is so delightful—and the cast so engaging—that we think anyone would be happier for having seen it. One suggestion: don't applaud when Mama Rose comes down the aisle (you'll drown out the first number). With Linda Lavin. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 246-0102.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY:** Jerry Sterner's comedy about a New York corporate raider's attempt to take over a decorous New England business maintains its suspense from beginning to end. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

DANCE

Just Asking I: How is it appropriate to apply the term "folk dancing" to the cosmopolitan Georgian State Dance Company of the U.S.S.R., whose founders and choreographers have taken as their model the discipline and comparative reserve of classical ballet, and whose imagery purveys the idea of chivalric royalty?

Just Asking II: What kind of standards are being invoked when a thunderous reception is accorded a group like Lezginka, the State Ensemble of Folk Dance of Daghestan, whose frantic pacing, punched-out imagery, and lack of musical variety would not be tolerated by Ed Sullivan's old audience?

Just Asking III: Why is it illuminating to lump together Lezginka and the Georgian State Dance Company, both full-time professional troupes, with the amateur groups of singer-dancers and storyteller-musicians who have appeared in New York within the past couple of years under the auspices of Asia Society and Dancing in the Streets?

You Be the Judge: On November 16, the U.S.S.R.'s Dmitri Pokrovsky Ensemble performs in Symphony Space under the rubric "Folk Traditions of Russia—Music & Dance." The program, devoted to songs and dances concerning the winter and summer solstices, draws on the company's "living library," which has been gathered by—and will be embodied by—scholars whose backgrounds include philology, ethnomusicology, and engineering.

New York City Ballet—Opening performances of the season. Nov. 20 at 7:30: "Serenade," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," and "Diamonds." (A benefit.) . . . ¶ Nov. 21 at 8: "Chaconne," "Songs of the Auvergne," and "The Concert." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Joffrey Ballet—Presenting "The Nutcracker," through Dec. 2. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Nov. 15-16 and Nov. 20-21 at 7:30, and Nov. 17-18 at 2 and 7:30.)

Garth Fagan Dance—*Nov. 13 at 7:30;* Nov. 16-17 at 8; Nov. 18 at 2; and Nov. 21 at 8: "Mask Mix Masque" and the première of "Until, By & If." . . . ¶ Nov. 14 at 8 and Nov. 18 at 7:30: "Oatka Trail," "Telling a Story," and "Daylight Savings Time." . . . ¶ Nov. 15 and Nov. 20 at 8: "Traipsing through the May" and other works. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

Nanette Bearden Contemporary Dance Theatre—Nov. 15 at 7:30: "Homage to Mary Lou: The Life, Love, Music, and Times of Mary Lou Williams." With the Mama Lu Parks Lindy Hoppers, guest artists. . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 7:30: Excerpts from "Homage to Mary Lou," as well as a film and a panel discussion. . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 7:30 and Nov. 18 at 3: Repertory works. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 598-0400.)

Limón Dance Company—Presenting José Limón's "Missa Brevis," a 1958 work. Musical accompaniment is provided by the Rutgers Oratorio Choir, directed by Richard Westenburg. Also on the program are the Beijing String Quartet playing Dvořák's "American" Quartet and the pianist Elyane Laussade playing Chopin and Liszt. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Nov. 15-17 at 8.)

CoDanceCo—New and repertory works. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Nov. 15-17 at 8, Nov. 18 at 3, and Nov. 21 at 8. Through Nov. 25.)

Dmitri Pokrovsky Ensemble—In a single performance. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 16 at 8.)

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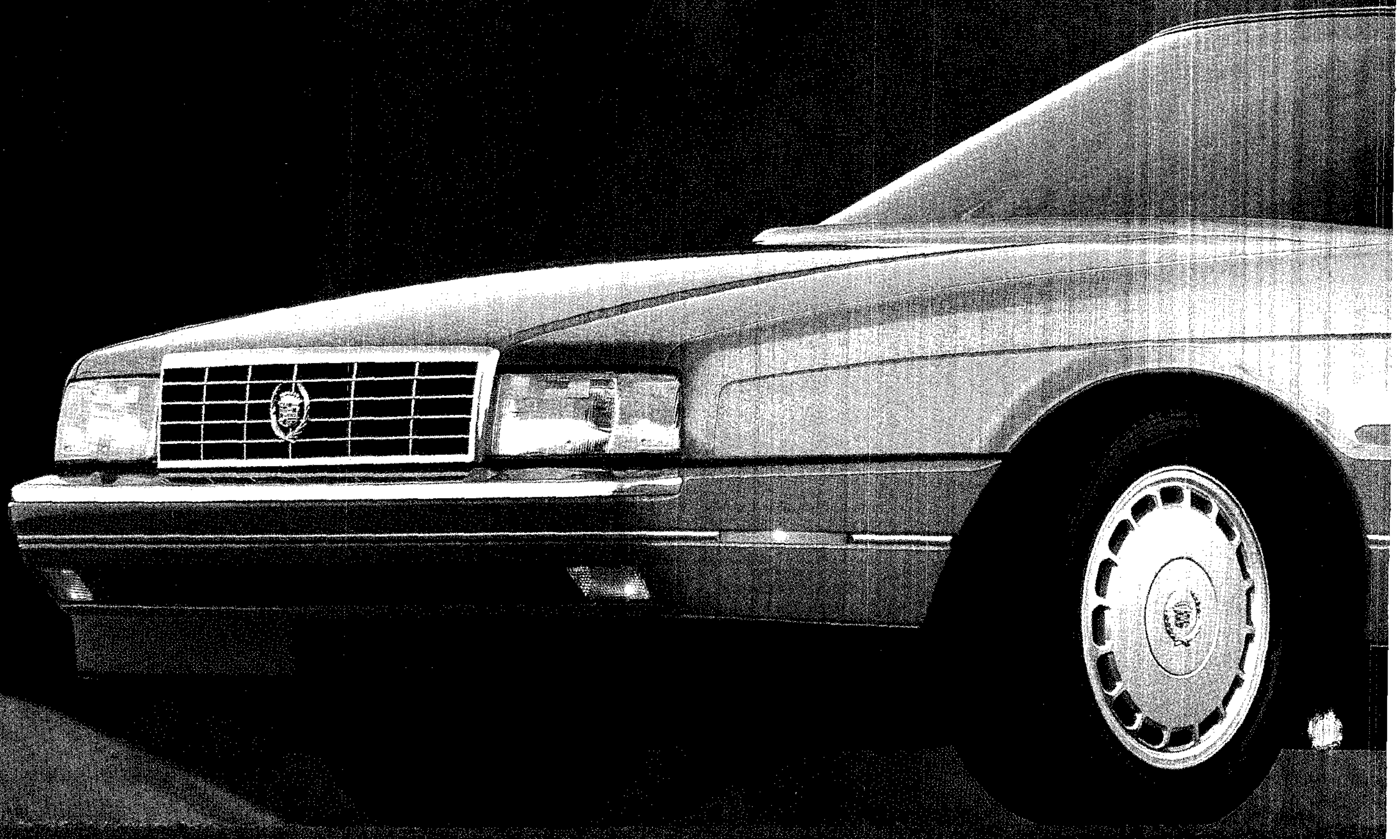

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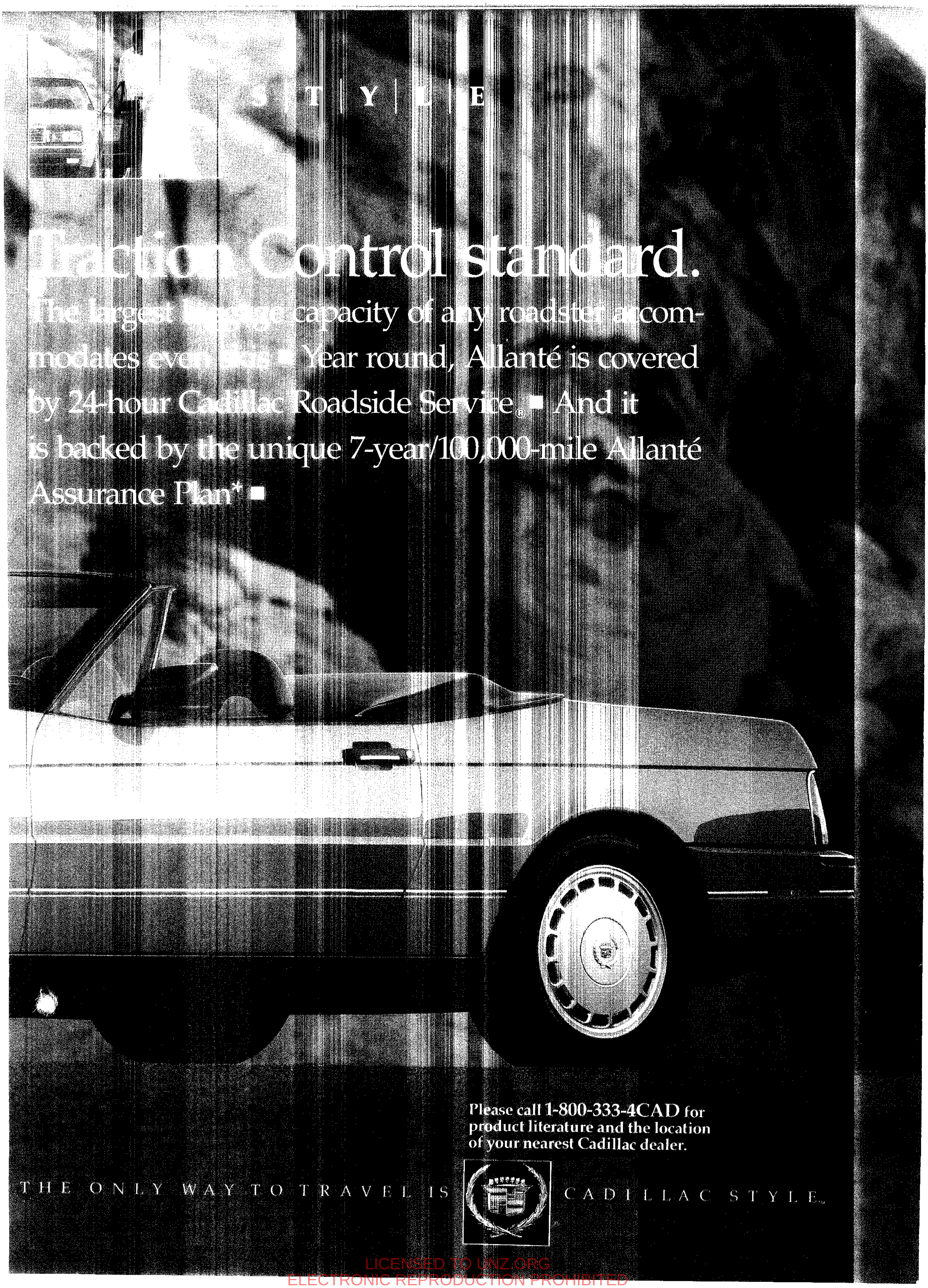

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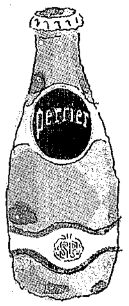

EARTH'S FIRST SOFT DRINK

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NIGHT LIFE

FOR the past couple of years, Mike Scott, of the Waterboys, has been only slightly more accessible than Elvis. The singer-songwriter has been holed up in Ireland. He has refused to do any videos and has granted only one or two interviews. His band's reputation is based solely on the fact that every couple of years it turns out another priceless record and burns down a concert hall or two. The Waterboys' personnel has changed considerably over the years—World Party chieftain Karl Wallinger apprenticed with them a while back—and so has their music. "This Is the Sea," a 1985 release that made an impression on every Emerald Isle rock band from U2 on down, is an excursion in anthem rock. Their 1988 album, "Fisherman's Blues," is a deeply Irish record—part elegy and part hoedown. (That Mike Scott is actually Scottish is one of life's unexplained mysteries.) The Waterboys' new album, "Room to Roam," may be a touch too eccentric. In the past, the band's songs have often rumbled on for six or seven minutes—when the Waterboys get carried away, they can make "Hey Jude" seem short and sweet. At two or three minutes, however, many of the new numbers are far too fleeting. "Room to Roam" isn't as powerful or liberating as some of the band's other efforts, but it's full of pleasures. Like the Waterboys' live shows—they'll be at the Beacon November 19 and 20—the record is awhirl with fiddles, whistles, flutes, bouzoukis, and accordions. It'll help pass the time during Mike Scott's next vanishing act.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Singer-actress **ANDREA MARCOVICCI** is currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. She has a quivering, sexy voice, uses all her theatrical skills to sing a song, and seems to hover around three main themes: how to find a man, how to hang on to him, and, if that fails, what to do when he leaves. At her show here last year, she sang everything from Berlin and Kern to the theme from "Tootsie," and quoted everyone from Dorothy Parker to Nietzsche to Peter Ustinov. Shows at nine-fifteen Tuesdays through Saturdays. Dining.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant, where wicker baskets overflow with fruit and vegetables and a row of Serrano hams hangs over the bar; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. **KAREN AKERS,** one of the brighter lights of the cabaret scene, who has lately been spending more time on Broadway (she appeared in "Grand Hotel") than in the clubs, is in the midst of an engagement here.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A jazz club that would be a perfect stop on a bus tour (there's even a souvenir shop that sells Kodak). It's a good idea to make a reservation and show up well in advance. **MAX ROACH,** a drummer with an uncanny ability to move with, or ahead of, the times—he was a seminal force in both bop and hard bop, and in the early eighties he began working with rappers—brings in his "double quartet" Nov. 13-18. **MC COY TYNER,** the ubiquitous pianist, leads his big band starting Nov. 20. First set at nine. Dining.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar where, if your neighbors coöperate, you can hear the beautiful, singular sound of musicians thinking. Nov. 12-17 belongs to the **VINCENT HERRING** quartet, and the fiery Memphis sax man **GEORGE COLEMAN** begins a week-long stay on Nov. 18 (with various accompanists). Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

CAT CLUB, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—Every Sunday night, this club, usually dominated by metalheads, is ceded to a gang of Lindy Hop enthusiasts called the New York Swing Dance Society. The Bronx River Jazz Orchestra takes the bandstand on Nov. 18. Music from eight to midnight.

CONDON'S, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—A snug, candlelit catacomb just east of Union Square. Pianist **JOHN HICKS** is in evidence Nov. 13-18, with his trio. Alto saxophonist **BOBBY WATSON** and friends commence work on Nov. 20. Music after ten.

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, posers, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. The motif is prehistoric punk—a Stone Age mural, assorted toy dinosaurs and pterodactyls—and on peak nights there's a "take no prisoners" atmosphere. The **SPIN DOCTORS** can be found here on Nov. 13; the **FUNKY KNIGHTS** claim Nov. 15; and Nov. 16 belongs to the **DEVIL DOGS,** a locally based garage-, punk-, and retro-rock outfit that focusses on such time-honored subjects as girls, cars, and getting hammered. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at ten, Fridays at midnight, and Saturdays at eleven.

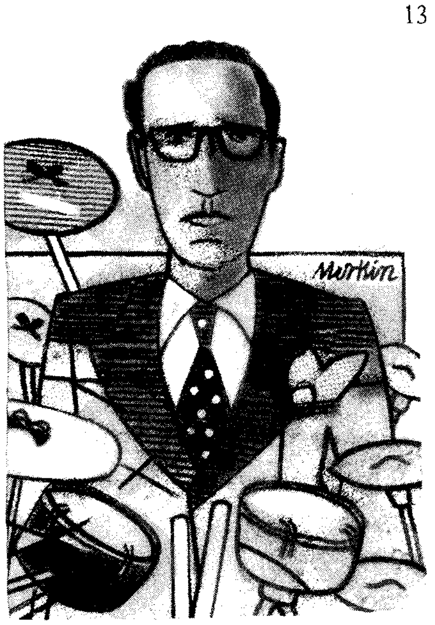
DELTA 88, 332 Eighth Ave., at 26th St. (924-3499)—A pleasant hangout for white-collar trash, where you'll find cold Dixie beer, collard greens, and plenty of men who know how to wear a leather vest. The place also features a truckload of sort-of-Southern items: a photo booth, a giant Amoco sign, an Evel Knievel lunchbox. Most nights, the buffet turns into a bandstand at nine.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—If submarines had jazz clubs, they might look like this basement haunt, which is reached by passing through a tight corridor where you half expect to bump into Admiral Nimitz. This is not the place for those with a fear of intimacy: at the front tables you can go eye to eye with your favorite performers, and no matter where you're seated there's not much room to practice your T'ai Chi. An all-star quartet holds forth Nov. 13-18: saxophonist **STANLEY TURRENTINE,** organist **JIMMY SMITH,** guitarist **KENNY BURRELL,** and drummer **GRADY TATE.** Jazz-blues singer and lyricist **MOSE ALLISON** gets going on Nov. 20, with a trio. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

FORTUNE GARDEN PAVILION, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—With jazz you get eggroll. At this posh-looking two-floor Chinese restaurant, tucked into a midtown skyscraper, you'll find a lot of businessmen and a lot of hanging plants. In the middle of the main dining room, you'll also find a Steinway grand, which belongs to **JOHN BUNCH** Nov. 13-18, with **JAY LEONHART** on bass duty. On Nov. 19 saxophonist Ed Finkel teams up with pianist Rio Clemente and bassist Roy Cumming. A trio chaired by trumpeter **HARRY (SWEETS) EDISON** begins a two-week stint on Nov. 20. Music from eight Mondays through Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.

KILIMANJARO, 531 W. 19th St. (627-2333)—The northern branch of the popular Washington, D.C., night spot. As the name suggests, African music is the sine qua non, be it live or d.j.-spun. Calypso, reggae, and world-beat formats also turn up; in any case, the huge dance floor seldom lies fallow. Jamaican rapper **PAPA LINLEY** performs on Nov. 14, and Ethiopia's **ASTER AWEKE** takes charge Nov. 16.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark-wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass-figurine lamps. The musicians gather around the Steinway that sits in the dining room, but chin music is often the dominant sound. The piano-bass duo of **JOHN COLLIANNI, JR.,** and **BILL MORING** can be heard Nov. 14-17. Music from nine-thirty.



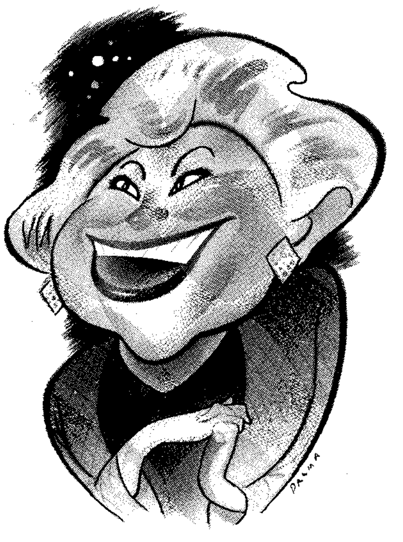
Max Roach at the Blue Note

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—Situated in a neighborhood that boasts the Puck Building to the west and a host of windshield washers to the east, this modest space provides a forum for freethinking musicians. Beat and melody are optional, "music" and "noise" relative terms. The perennially spooky and riveting **KRISTEN HERSH,** who is the Throwing Muses' chief singer-songwriter, will be here on Nov. 13, trading sets with **NORA YORK.** Nov. 14 is given over to Travelogue—David Moss and Joshua Freed. **LYDIA LUNCH,** who appears on Nov. 17 (with Wanda Coleman), first surfaced in the seventies as guitarist and singer for Teen-Age Jesus & the Jerks, and later made the transition to performance artist, pop poet, and monologuist. Her point of view is nihilistic to a fault, as evidenced by such pithy statements as "If what I write is literature, you'd better emphasize the litter." Music after nine.

LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—A Texan hangout where good old boys and Southern sorority girls mix with urban cowboys and those just looking. "Roadhouse" is an accurate description: it's a checked-tablecloth, long-necked-Bud, side-of-beef kind of place. **ROOMFUL OF BLUES,** the Rhode Island jump-blues band founded in 1967 by guitarist Duke Robillard (who has since moved on), holds court on Nov. 16. There's a birthday bash for the gravel-voiced singer-pianist **DR. JOHN** on Nov. 20, with unannounced guests. Music after nine. Dining.

LUDLOW STREET CAFÉ, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest below-stairs room that looks like a slightly spruced-up tenement-building apartment. There's cheap Ecuadoran food, a greater-East Village crowd, and, every Monday night, **BEAT RODEO,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mix of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, the Velvets, and various pop curiosities. Music begins at eleven.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A recent addition to the



Sylvia Syms at Michael's Pub

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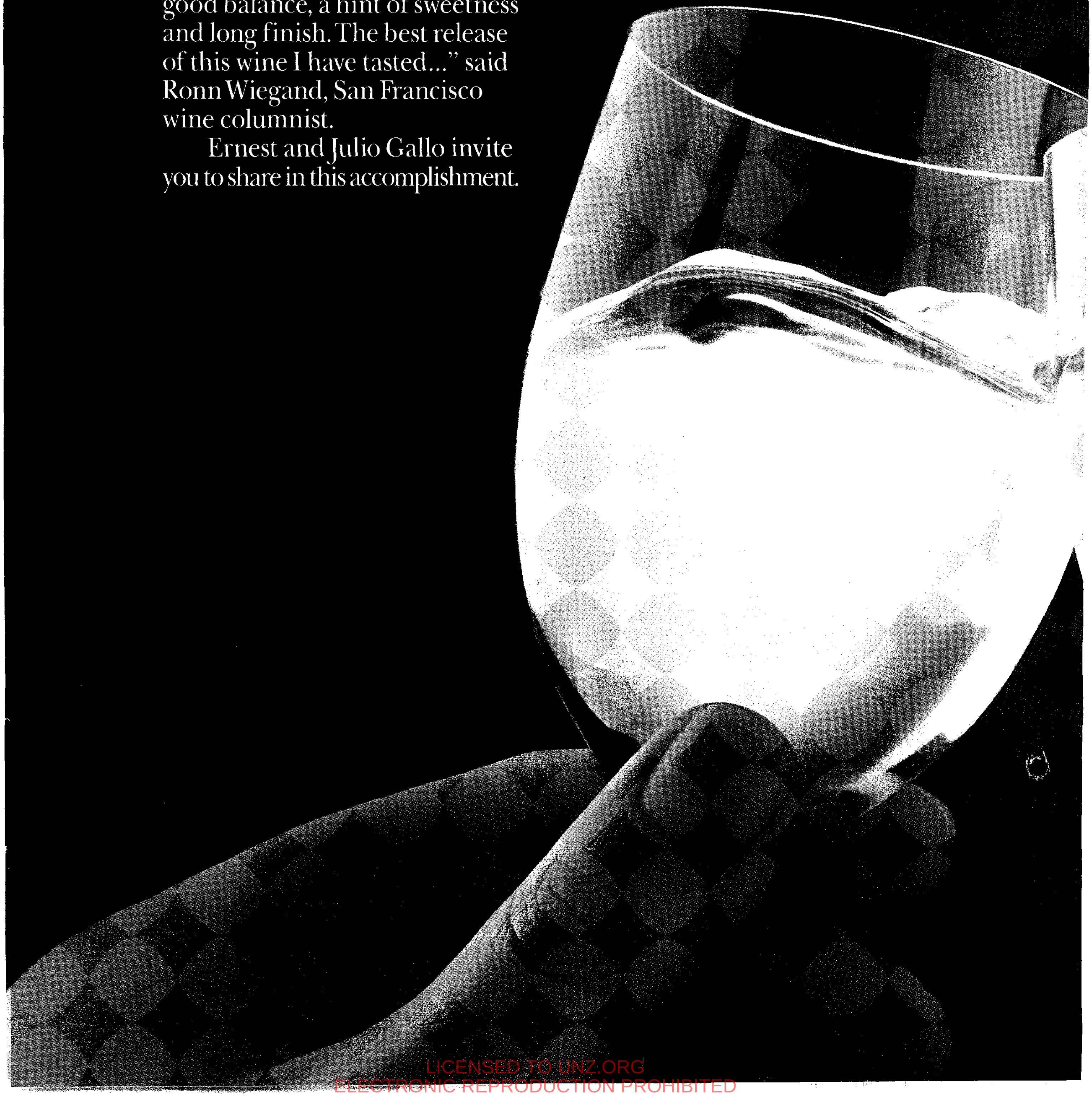

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. Don't go expecting to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. In the fifties, **LUTHER (GUITAR JUNIOR) JOHNSON,** like many bluesmen before and since, emigrated from the Deep South to Chicago, where he became a potentate on the West Side music scene. He rose to wider fame in the seventies, when he joined up with Muddy Waters (a relationship that lasted over seven years), and began leading his own groups in the eighties. He'll be bringing his band here Nov. 20-21. Music from nine.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—A small-pond club for big-fish bands. There's not much here to look at: it's a back-room affair with a dingy stage and a baby grand someone apparently tried to cover with papier-mâché. Still, the bookers know their college-radio playlists. A few highlights: **JAZZ BUTCHER** on Nov. 12; **LYDIA LUNCH** and Wanda Coleman on Nov. 15; Joe Henry, the Jayhawks, and Michael Hurley on Nov. 16.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A midtown restaurant and jazz lair for the tasselled-loafers set. The dark, sombre bar (carved-wood lions, iron grillwork) looks like a place you'd find in London's financial district; the dining room—putting-green carpet, lime-green leather banquettes—has more of a country-club feel. The jazz and cabaret singer **SYLVIA SYMS** continues through Nov. 17, backed up by **BUDDY BARNES, STEVE LA SPINA, JOE COCUZZO,** and **LOREN SCHOENBERG.** Closed Sundays.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A great, pricey cabaret in the sky. Lee Roy Reams, billed as "Broadway's quintessential song-and-dance man," is around for the next few weeks. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Mondays belong to Howie Wyeth's ragtime trio, Tuesdays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS,** and Wednesdays to Stan Rubin's outfit. Rick Hardeman and His Basin Street Six fill the Friday spot, and Bob Cantwell and His Stompers claim Saturdays. Music from six on Sundays, from eight-thirty Mondays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays.

RITZ, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—A rock establishment where the customer is not always right. If you're willing to endure proof-of-drinking-age wristbands, primitive notions of crowd control, and a staff of "I breaka you face" security people, you can usually find some worthwhile bands. The **GO-GO'S,** who have just released a greatest-hits collection, and who have recently reunited for some concert dates, stop in on Nov. 12. The **COCTEAU TWINS** headline on Nov. 14, and **SKINNY PUPPY** lays claim to Nov. 16. **JANE'S ADDICTION,** who come in Nov. 20-21, recently released an album, "Ritual de lo Habitual," that sweats and grunts in an effort to prove that thrash-metal dressed up in new clothes and a new attitude can be fresh and exciting. It doesn't work. Shows begin at nine Sundays through Thursdays, and at eleven Fridays and Saturdays.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A big, cheerful room, painted a light tropical blue, where you can pick 'em up and set 'em down to sounds from Brazil, Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. Ample seating for the contemplative. The schedule, in part: Nov. 14, Sybil; Nov. 15, Kolos; Nov. 16, Shandileer; Nov. 17, Hot Salsa (from Sweden); Nov. 19, Skatalites and Bad Manners; and Nov. 21, calypso great the **MIGHTY SPARROW.** Closed Sundays. Dining.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with red brick and more pinewood than a ski lodge. The flugelhornist and trumpeter **ART FARMER** continues through Nov. 18, with a quintet featuring tenor saxophonist **CLIFFORD JORDAN.** Beginning Nov. 20, the **NAT ADDERLEY** sextet holds sway. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter Miles Evans is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Located on a Chelsea block that's like an urban Disneyland (Chelsea Billiards, an indoor miniature-golf course, a trendy all-night diner, Limelight around the corner), this roller-rink-size bar-and-restaurant is a lot bigger and a lot slicker than the old Tramps, but the emphasis on solid rock and blues remains. **DAVID BROMBERG,** Allison Kraus, and others perform on Nov. 16; Nov. 17 is the property of singer-pianist-tunesmith **CHARLES BROWN,** an R. & B. star from the late forties and onward.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." Saxophonist-flutist-composer **HENRY THREADGILL** holds sway Nov. 13-18; pianist **DON PULLEN,** whose fingers range from bop to soul to free jazz, directs a trio as of Nov. 20. A big band formerly led by the late Mel Lewis holds sway on Mondays. Music after ten.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. A double bill featuring guitarist **JAMES (BLOOD) ULMER** and jazz-rock drummer **BILLY COBHAM** is slated for Nov. 16; and the Grandmothers, formerly Frank Zappa's gang, the Mothers of Invention, claim Nov. 17. **BLUES TRAVELER** are a local group who invite comparison to the Grateful Dead, both in their penchant for extended jams and, on a smaller scale than Jerry & Co., their devoted following of neo-flower children. They'll be performing here on Nov. 21.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. Pianist **CAROL BRITTO** and bassist **VICTOR GASKIN** team up Nov. 12-17; pianist **ROGER KELLAWAY** and bassist **JAY LEONHART** start work on Nov. 19. Music weeknights from eight and Sundays from seven.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

FORGET Baedeker. Leave the *Guide Michelin* at home. If you're homesick for the Sound Factory, Frommer's tome is going to be about as satisfying as ten minutes at the Musée d'Orsay. Nothing they sell at Barnes & Noble will help you plunge into the night life of Paris with the verve of Diane Brill's recent behavior at Thierry Mugler's fashion show there. These pieces of advice may.

—Bring money. More than you ever thought you'd need. About a year's tuition at a Seven Sisters school for each week. The dollar really is a joke. What they charge for drinks at a night club isn't.

—Plan your cabs. It takes only one night to realize that not one of the loads of vehicles zooming around Paris has your name on it. If you don't call ahead you'll catch one about the same time as they finish renovating the Louvre. Get the phone number of Taxi Bleu from your hotel concierge. It's even more imperative than carrying the green card that you don't leave home without. You want to know what "the poor people of Paris" feel like? Try walking home from Le Palace in the ninth arrondissement to your hotel in the sixth at a drizzling 4 A.M. You won't feel like singing.

—Enjoy house music. Deep house music. Deeply monotonous house music. The pervasive sound in Paris clubs is akin to Kraftwerk's producing Soul II Soul and then having the d.j. play the result at double the beats per minute.

—Get a good night's sleep. *Before* you go out. Le Central doesn't have a line outside until 3 A.M. Le Boy peaks on Friday at about four. Le Privilège doesn't open until 6. L'Endroit doesn't get crowded until 8. None of them serve croissants, let alone coffee. Just as well. You probably couldn't afford them anyway.

—Practice smoldering. Subtler than vogueing and far more cinematic, this stance consists of finding the right key light, staring straight ahead like Alain Delon, and smoking a cigarette without looking at it while your body says everything your mouth won't. Smiling is forbidden.

—Follow Jean-Paul Gaultier around. Everybody else does. Bleached, striped, and unabashed, Gaultier is to nocturnals what Aznavour is to lovers. Dozens of young smolderers flock about his regular Sunday-night table at the decrepit Au Diable des Lombards as if he were giving out free samples. "It's not the food," says the *homme terrible.* "It's the place." Gaultier has a good sense of humor. Then again, when was the last time he had to wait for a cab?

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL—O Vertigo Danse, an eight-member dance troupe from Canada, in "Don Quichotte" and "Chagall." (Nov. 13 at 7, Nov. 14-17 at 8, and Nov. 18 at 3.) . . . ¶ Great masters of Persian music, featuring Chahram Nazeri. (Nov. 16-17 at 8.) (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. The festival continues through Dec. 9.)

BIG APPLE CIRCUS—Performances under the little big top run through Jan. 6 in Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park. For ticket and schedule information, call 268-3030.

"THE CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR"—Radio City Music Hall's annual Yuletide dance-a-rama—with the Rockettes, of course. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. Through Jan. 3. For information about show times and tickets, call 247-4777.)

"WALT DISNEY'S WORLD ON ICE"—In which Huey, Dewey, and Louie get lost. Featuring Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Pluto, Goofy, Sebastian, and Ursula, all on skates. (Nassau Coliseum. Nov. 13-18. For information about show times and tickets, call 1-516 794-9300.)

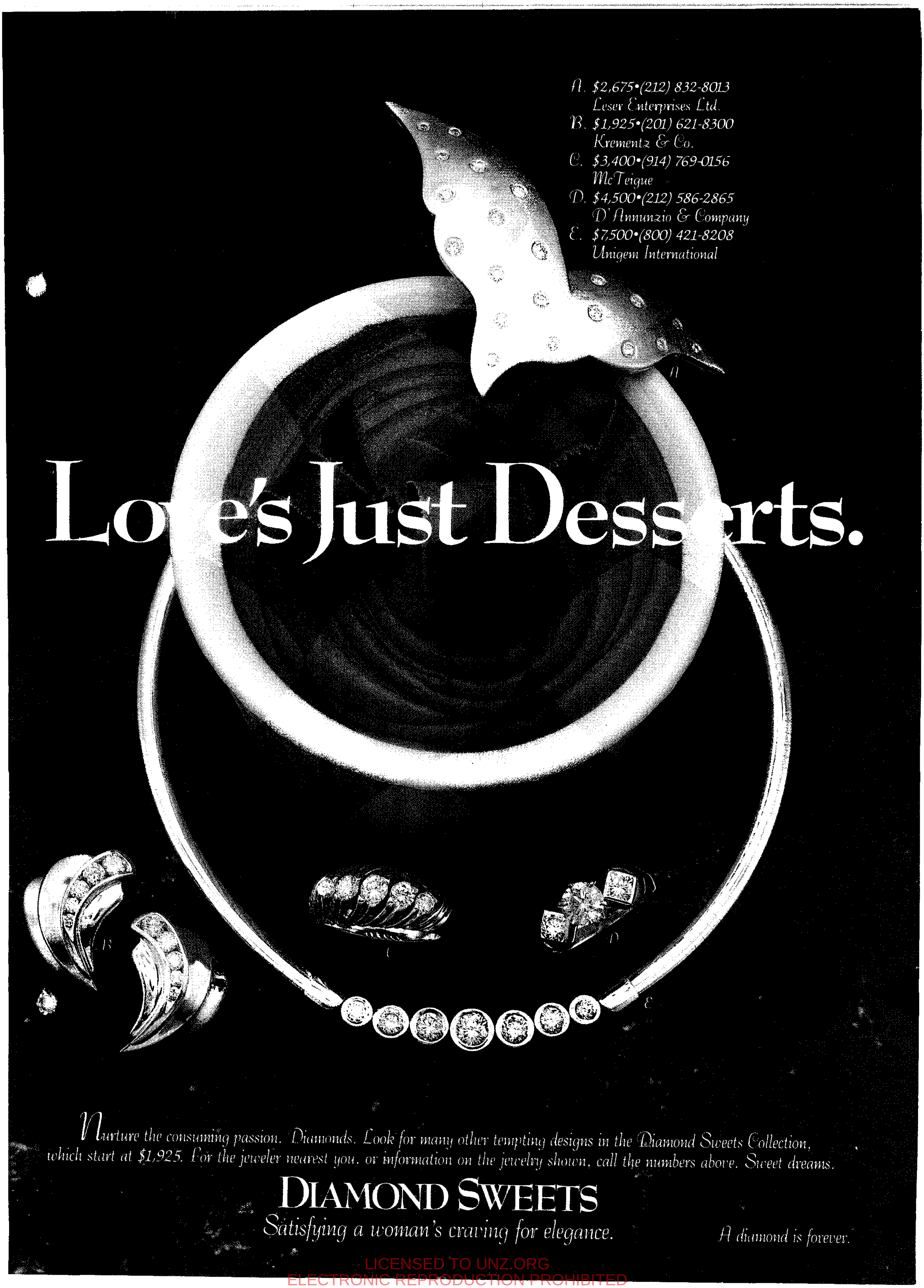
DONNA UCHIZONO—In "San Andreas," a dance-theatre work performed by a company of five. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Nov. 15-17 at 8:30, and Nov. 18 at 3.)

JOHN O'KEEFE—In his new monologue, "Vid." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Nov. 15-18 at 9:30. Through Nov. 25.)

PENNY ARCADE—Presenting a new work about growing up, with a cast of twenty. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Nov. 15-17 at 10.)

COMEDY CONTEST—Dennis Miller and Dana Carvey m.c. a competition among four "undiscovered" standup comics. (Avery Fisher Hall. 874-2424. Nov. 19 at 8.)

DAVID CALE—In one of his monologues. (Museum of Modern Art Auditorium, 11 W. 53rd St. Nov. 20 at 8. For information about tickets, call 708-9750.)



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ART

IF Jean-Michel Basquiat were still alive he would be turning thirty next month. This is but one of a welter of free-floating statistics, half-thoughts, and strips of memory like stray footage that will surely dog the paths of many viewers as they assess the current exhibition of Basquiat drawings, from 1981 to 1988, at the Robert Miller gallery (41 East 57th Street) until the end of the month. The artist's tender age does not resonate so much because of pathos—nipped buds and such. On the contrary, it strikes a difficult but triumphant chord. Basquiat hit the scene in the late seventies, aesthetically fully formed at the age of about nineteen, when he first raised the mundane copyright symbol to the level of art. This was Basquiat's brief Samo phase, during which his memorable and undeniably posh-looking blurps of concrete poetry, a sort of graffiti *en travesti*, appeared on many of SoHo's then unhallowed as well as unworried walls. The paradoxically pristine intensity of his work, his personality, and quite possibly of the period itself, was such that he was able to connect with maximum impact and effect.

By 1981 and the publication in *Artforum* of an article by Rene Ricard titled "The Radiant Child," which was more *and* less about him, Basquiat had a connoisseurish following. Affinities in his work to, for instance, work by Alechinsky and Twombly were evident to quite a few people, including Basquiat. By the mid-eighties, he had already influenced artists older and in some cases more established than himself, and could count Francesco Clemente as well as Andy Warhol among his peer-collaborators. He may have become something of a deity to art-school denizens and ambitious kids from the street, but, unlike his near-exact contemporary Keith Haring, he was never really a populist hero. He did not have the "common touch." He was a brilliant and virulent aesthete. His art—impeccably reckless compositions and a calligraphic style that joins the archaic world to the more effete salons of Europe and to a sort of psychological DMZ that could accommodate Antonin Artaud—seems almost virginally self-sufficient for all its obsessive references to anatomies and medical charts, history, cultures, pollutants, and sex. In this sense Basquiat is like Egon Schiele (also, of course, Rimbaud). Schiele died at almost exactly the same age, leaving a very particular and intensely compressed œuvre that expresses a blazingly clear vision and an eviscerated heart, and in which the genius, and the locus, is youth.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

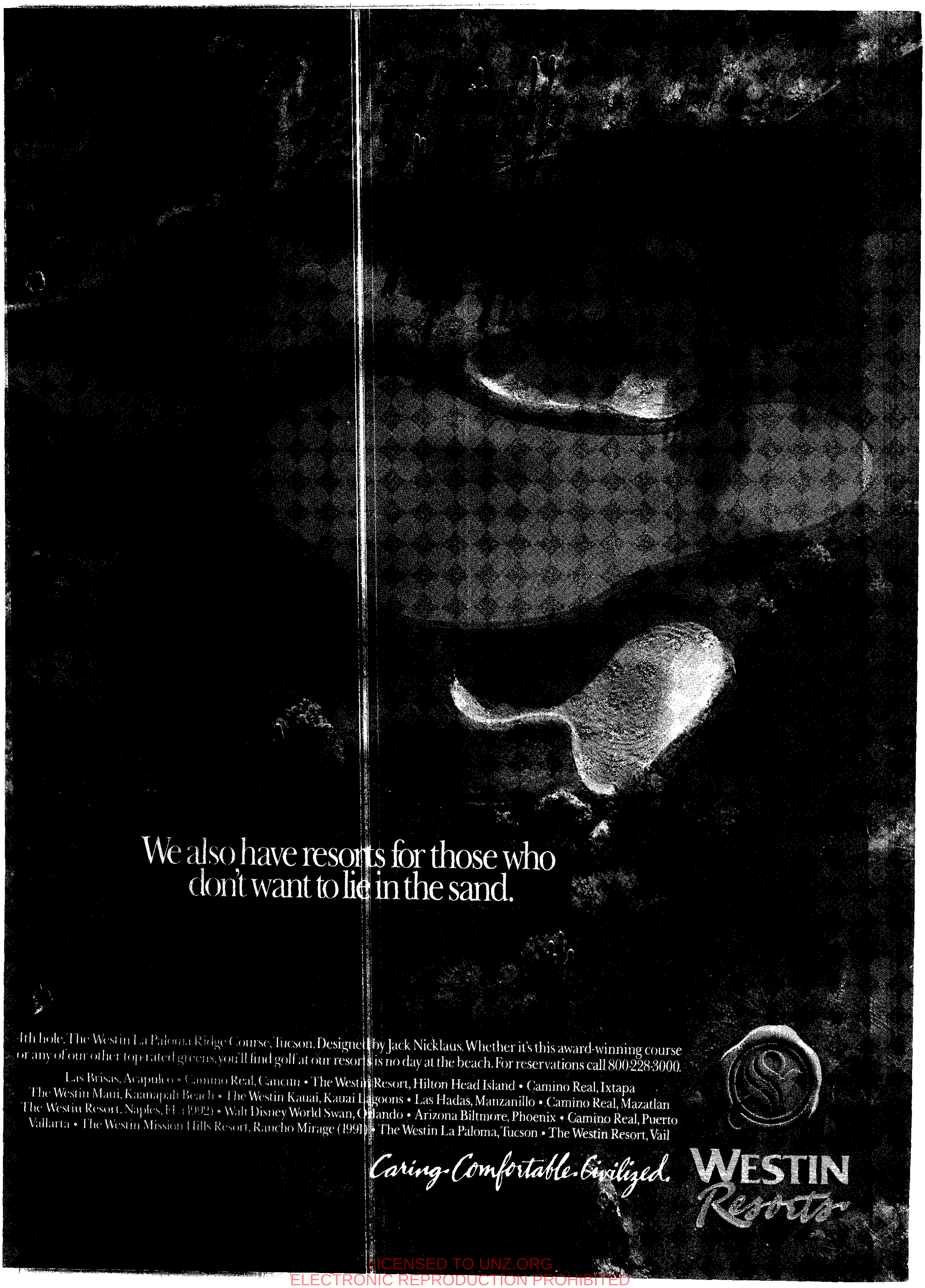
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—The mega-exhibition of Mexican art titled "Splendors of Thirty Centuries" renews one's faith in the blockbuster. While one could justifiably take issue with reducing the achievements of the Olmecs to a few exquisitely grumpy statues, this is an epic display in the best Hollywood tradition: a drama that encompasses the history of a land and its people. A map of Teotihuacán—a city whose wealth derived from obsidian trade—can transport one simply with its references to the Street of the Dead, the Plaza of the Moon, and the Pyramid of the Sun. Also on view are some of the most haunting figurative sculptures you are likely to see, from the Mayan City of Palenque, and astonishingly abstract sculptures of a shell and a feathered serpent from Tenochtitlán. The devastating impact of the Spanish conquest is clearly demonstrated when the exhibition shifts abruptly to massive stone crosses and heavily embroidered vestments. Room after room in the show is devoted to second-rate liturgical art in a gloppy, morose style; unfortunately, the more compelling folk-art traditions inspired by religious zeal receive little attention. It's not until the exhibition reaches this century that the painting gets interest[illegible] Displays of the extraordinary range of Diego Rivera, and of the equally single-minded vision of his tormented wife, Frida Kahlo—and of many lesser-known figures—leave one hungry for more extensive exhibitions of their work. Through Jan. 13. . . . ¶ "Wright of Derby," a retrospective of portraits, landscapes, and paintings with scientific themes by Joseph Wright (1734-97). Through Dec. 2. . . . ¶ A new skylit sculpture court has opened on the main floor, and is home to several large French and Italian works from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, including Sarrazin's "Leda and the Swan" and Rodin's "The Burghers of Calais." . . . ¶ The recently acquired "Evening: Landscape with Aqueduct," by Théodore Géricault (1791-1824), is the focus of a small exhibition of his landscapes and related works. Through Jan. 13. . . . ¶ Eighteenth-century Italian drawings, including works by Francesco Guardi, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, and others. Through Dec. 9. . . . ¶ Fifteen American quilts and coverlets, made between 1803 and 1930, are on view. Through Jan. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture" is divided into four themes (graffiti, caricature, comics, advertising) and includes more than two hundred and fifty works. Through Jan. 15. . . . ¶ Twenty-one new photographs by Paul D'Amato, Carl Pope, and JoAnn Verburg. Through Jan. 8. . . . ¶ Kiki Smith's installation includes such objects as cast-glass spermlike forms on a black rubber mat and water-cooler bottles inscribed with the names of life-sustaining fluids. Through Jan. 1. . . . ¶ A video installation by Gary Hill, consisting of body images displayed through several stripped cathode-ray tubes. Through Jan. 6. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until autumn, 1991.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Mind Over Matter" attempts to delineate a youngish "third generation of idea-oriented" artists—Liz Larner, Ronald Jones, Tishan Hsu, Nayland Blake, Ashley Bickerton, and Annette Lemieux. Their works move away from what in today's climate may seem like the indulgences of commodification to an interest in socially relevant issues. The effort is laudable, the installation exquisite, the selections often quite thoughtful—but the show is a mess. It circles around some potentially interesting thoughts without ever taking off, largely because of the mediocrity of the work. Th[illegible]gh Jan. 6. . . . ¶ Ninety-five paintings, constructions, and drawings by Burgoyne Diller (1906-65). Through Nov. 25. . . . ¶ Several animal sculptures from the museum's collection are on view in the lobby, including works by Hunt Diederich, Gaston Lachaise, and Alexander Calder. Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—A lobby installation by Joseph Kosuth, who has selected works from the museum's collection that at one time or another may have been deemed offensive. Through Dec. 3. . . . ¶ An exhibition of sixty paintings by Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917). Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "Milton Avery in Black and White" is a display of eighty drawings in pencil, ink, and crayon, made by Avery between 1929 and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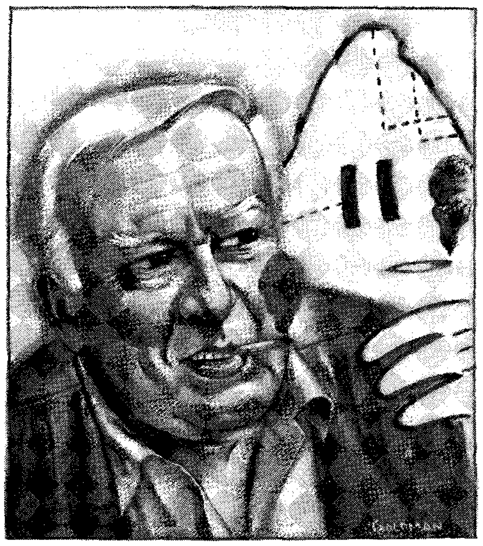

Philip Guston at McKee

1959. Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ Forty works of art from Oceania (mostly from the Sepik and Ramu river basins in New Guinea), including three-inch-long fishhooks, three monumental carved-wood "guardians," and a skull rack made of palm, raffia, and bamboo. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, Broadway at 155th St.—An annual exhibition of paintings, drawings, and prints. Among the fifty-six artists represented this year are Eric Fischl, Joan Nelson, Jane Dickson, and Theophilus Brown. Through Dec. 9. (Open daily, except Mondays, 1 to 4.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"Court Arts of Indonesia" is a meticulously selected and exquisitely installed show, with just the right number of pieces to titillate but not overwhelm. Extraordinary detail abounds, especially in numerous ceremonial lances, which were symbolic expressions of power; very delicate gold jewelry; woven fabrics; and shadow puppets. There are also some curiosities, including a belt of human hair; a Javanese scroll depicting a royal procession, with a perspective that is part Eastern, part Western, and as wacky as Uccello; a golden skeleton; and a modesty plate, which is a kind of Indonesian fig leaf. Through Dec. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse—"Visions of Home" is a display of ten prize-winning designs, along with forty other entries, for affordable housing at a specific seven-acre site in the South Bronx. The show is part of this fall's "Home: A Place in the World" series. Through Jan. 27. . . . ¶ Seventy prints produced by El Taller de Gráfica Popular, founded in 1937 in Mexico. The show is part of the series "Mexico: A Work of Art." Through Jan. 27. (Open weekdays, except Fridays, 10 to 4:30; Sundays, 11 to 4:30.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"The Eccentric Painters of Yangzhou" presents thirty works by eleven unorthodox, innovative artists who lived in southern China in the eighteenth century. Through Dec. 15. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—Among the many strong works on paper here by Adolph Menzel (1815-1905) are a stunning, flesh-warm drawing of the Barberini Faun; deep platonic renderings of suits of armor; and a beautiful sketch, titled "Moltke's Binoculars," of leather long caressed and distressed. Through Nov. 18. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"Treasures of Eton College Library: 550 Years of Collecting" is an exhibition of more than two hundred manuscripts, rare books, drawings, and watercolors. Included are the first edition of Thomas Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" and the manuscript of "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." Through Nov. 25. . . . ¶ Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is a hundred years old, but the autographed manuscript, on display here, doesn't look a day over twenty-five. Through Dec. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—Through maps, paintings, photographs, and prints, "Within Bohemia's Borders" documents the turbulent history of Greenwich Village from 1830 to 1930. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—While the title "Women in Mexico" suggests an enormous and ferociously dramatic tapestry, this exhibition is in essence a sampler. This is not a complaint: the show is fast-paced and a lot of fun. We begin with the unfettered and varied Surrealism of the astonishing Frida Kahlo, and of Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo. And we're brought up to the present with work by artists now in their thirties, for example the spooked still-lifes and gritty ex-voto mythologies of a wonderful photographer named Flor Garduño. Through Dec. 2. . . . ¶ An exhibition of a hundred and thirteen master drawings, from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, by such artists as Poussin, Boucher, Fragonard, Delacroix, Degas, and Cézanne. From the Louis-Antoine Prat collection, in Paris. Through Jan. 20. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—"From Receiver to Remote Control: The TV Set" features serpentine banks of virtually every TV model ever made and meticulously reconstructed period rooms that attempt to define a sociology of family life as it has revolved around the set. Through Nov. 25. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—Manuscript fragments, letters, first editions, photographs, and illustrations are all part of "Charles Dickens: His Life and Work." (Berg Collection. Open daily, except Sundays and Thursdays, 10 to 6.)

Queens Museum, Flushing Meadow Park—"Keith Haring: Future Primeval." The operative word in this survey of works from the first half of Haring's brief but loaded career is diversity. Even his earliest student works (1979) display a simultaneous interest in Expressionism and illustration, abstraction and representation, shock and fine design. In the mid-eighties, when he was a rising worldwide media star, Haring experimented with color, asymmetrical compositions, a more scenelike narrative. These post-pictographic works are generally considered inferior, but the few included here are gems and suggest, as a show like this should but rarely does, that further study is in order. Through Nov. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5:30.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Joan Mitchell—This grossly underrated second-generation Abstract Expressionist is beginning to receive more attention. The current exhibition consists of just five large paintings and four smaller works, and it gives an excellent sense of the consistency of Mitchell's vision, as well as of her growth. The focus is on paintings, from the late fifties and early sixties, that are expressions of deeply internalized states, like black holes of agitated, often violent energy. Their darkness suggests that you may not want to know the maker too well. From there the show jumps to the mid-eighties, principally represented by a large painting executed in a fairly similar manner but in an entirely different spirit. The work is lyrical, looking outward toward nature; its color is luminescent. Mitchell's recent work is quite Monet-like, and she is perhaps the only artist to paint in a way that conjures the master Impressionist without seeming weaker for the comparison. Through Dec. 15. (Mathes, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948)—Collages, constructions, and paintings from the twenties, thirties, and forties. This show looks especially staid—so damn quiet and classy—while the great Dadaist himself was a rummaging, visionary pack rat whose single best-known work, the "Merzbau" (long since destroyed), was a virtual cathedral to eccentric freedom and the innate spirit of accumulated junk. Any occasion, however, to see work by Schwitters should not be missed, and there are many wonderful objects here, such as a group of cigarette-pack collages from the mid-thirties that really do seem to suggest that all Europe was going up in smoke; a theosophical-looking painting called "Nebulous," from 1942, that prefigures early-eighties work by Bill Jensen; and an incredibly sweet and compositionally masterly 1947 collage with a "Holy Night" theme. Through Nov. 17. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St.)

Short List—**constantin brancusi,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. (through Dec. 15); **arthur dove** and **joseph stella,** York, 21 E. 65th St. (through Nov. 17); **bunny harvey,** Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 17); **howard hodgkin,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (through Dec. 1); **piero manzoni,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 1); **jules olitski,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 1); **joan thorne,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through Nov. 24).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Georg Baselitz—A most impressive twenty-panel painting of women, characteristically upside down, intended as a commemoration of the fire-bombing of Dresden. With this work, Baselitz establishes himself as one of the most forceful painters of our time. The images range from fairly detailed to nearly abstract, and they have a frenzied energy that begs comparison to de Kooning, who also depicted women in a particularly violent way without in the end seeming to be misogynistic. The panels are made of wood, and the artist has carved chaotic grids into them, which when combined with the crusty painting technique results in a work of symphonic proportions. Through Dec. 1. (Pace, 142 Greene St.) . . . ¶ The carving in Baselitz's recent work places him in dialogue with Cubism, a dynamic even more fully explored in a series of wood sculptures, titled "Women of Dresden," at Pace's midtown space. The eleven sculptures are quite large and are painted a particularly acidic yellow. They look as if they have been hacked with an axe in a Johnsian crosshatch technique, leaving many of their features mutilated and their faces caved in. But somehow the mood of the series manages to be surprisingly tame and, when compared to that of the panel painting, a bit disappointing. Through Nov. 24. (32 E. 57th St.)

John Duff / Ben Nicholson (1894-1982)—Duff is a very seventies artist. His Fiberglas sculptures—with their cocoon, pod, and radiating spiral shapes—have great presence in an installation in which each hangs on a wall independently. They're odd objects: not quite enigmatic, not quite minimalistic, not quite evocative. Perhaps it is these "almost" qualities that sustain the viewer. Through Nov. 17. (Lipton—formerly Loughelton—at 67 Prince St., has a concurrent show of related works.) / This British artist fell between the cracks of European modernism. Like that of some of his American contemporaries, Nicholson's style was determined by developments on the Continent—in this case Cubism and neoplasticism—and outside England there has been a tendency to downplay his work because of its possible derivativeness. But what this nicely selected show of drawings, constructions, and a few paintings—most of them from late in his life—makes clear is that Nicholson forged a highly personal and highly developed way of drawing interiors and still-lifes. The works swing between representation and abstraction, but the vision remains consistent, the line unmistakably modest, the composition no less than a signature. Through Nov. 17. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**milton avery,** Borgenicht, 724 [illegible]th Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 28); **fernando botero,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 24); **deborah brown,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 17); **charles burchfield,** Kennedy, 40 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 17); **jean dubuffet,** Urban, 500 Park Ave., at 59th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 22); **lucio fontana,** Daverio, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 5); **leon goldin,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 28); **morris graves,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 24); **philip guston,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 24); **david hammons,** Tilton, 24 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 28); **al held,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 1); **rebecca horn,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 8); **william king,** Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 20);

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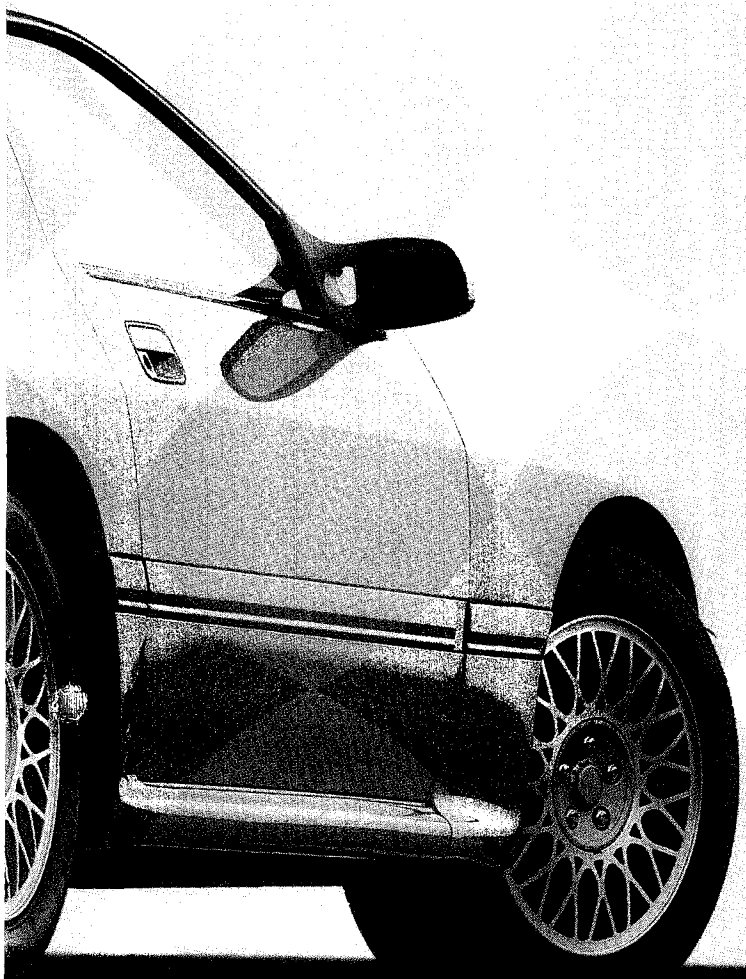

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ART—Cont'd

CLEMENT MEADMORE, Heidenberg, 50 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 15); **ROBERT MOTHERWELL,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 24); **GEORGE NEGROPONTE,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 15); **VICTOR PASMORE,** Center for International Contemporary Arts, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Feb. 17); **DAVID SMITH,** Washburn, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 1); **FRANCISCO TOLEDO,** Haime, 41 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 24).

GALLERIES—SoHo

ARMAN—This is an entertaining, peculiarly uplifting show of dozens of canvases, each covered with row upon row of paint tubes, along with their squiggled and spewed contents. The main gallery is dramatically installed: there is a grand wall of ultramarine-blue works opposite a wall of yellow, orange, and gold ones. Through Nov. 17. (Baghoomian, 555 Broadway.)

WALTER DARBY BANNARD—Color-field painting is currently undergoing a reconsideration, and there's something aggressively compelling about this practitioner's new works. Like recent work by Jules Olitski, these pieces are profoundly ugly and composed of mammoth paint strokes. But whereas Olitski's paintings are as thick as tar frosting, Bannard's are transparent and rolling, gestural in the way of Chinese landscapes. Through Nov. 24. (Greenberg Wilson, 560 Broadway.)

ALAN BELCHER—New works that are among the artist's silliest, most pun-filled, and most resonant. The show consists of packed rows of splayed animal skins, each of which has a photograph at its center. (The gallery looks like a "tanning" salon.) The spirit of the work is critical, and it tackles such issues as furs, fashion, excess, opulence, disposability, and hunting. But the critique is lighthearted, rooted in visual puns: "Wolverings" are wolverine skins with photos of soda-can tabs; "Methane" has pictures of cow rears on cowhides; and the titles of "Cantaloupe Antelope" and the somewhat more toxic "Mercury Cougar" are self-explanatory. Perhaps the strongest works are the "Beached Seals," consisting of sealskins, several of them covered with pictures of syringes and other medical refuse, and one "Baby Seal" with a photo of a human fetus. The works seem like paintings, but are presented as trophies. Through Nov. 24. (Baer, 476 Broome St.)

KEITH DONOVAN—An auspicious first New York show for a young artist based in Geneva. Donovan has developed an idiosyncratic technique that is part painting and part collage, and in which the canvas itself is apparent. The shardlike collage elements are pasted onto the grounds as if to suggest calligraphic ruins, or the outlines of etiolated and excavated comic strips, and they have a rather high-flown, if slightly anemic, romantic air. This handsome group of midsized black-and-white abstractions suggests Twombly, Johns, Lichtenstein, and *affichistes* in general, while seeming airily insouciant and not particularly derivative. Through Nov. 17. (Kasmin, 580 Broadway.)

TRACY GRAYSON / IAN HAMILTON FINLAY—These square landscape paintings of snowy peaks and babbling brooks are very soothing and as benign as calendar illustrations, which they strongly resemble. / Finlay has consistently adapted classical signifiers to political ends in a most interesting way. In this show the artist presents eight proposals for outdoor art works, ranging from a garden in the form of a Poussin landscape to a scheme with a neoclassical gateway. The works' formats—short books and portfolios—help clarify Finlay's sometimes obscure literary references. Through Nov. 21. (Burgin, 130 Prince St.)

EUGÈNE LEROY—The traditionalist who hungers for paint need look no further than these glorious oil-encrusted works—they have passages so thick you could grab them with your hand. The artist's great gift is for the kind of complicated color wars one might associate with de Kooning's landscapes. But here the over-all tones are dark and murky, with bright highlights of white, yellow, green, red, or—more likely—all of the above. Through Nov. 24. (Thorp, 103 Prince St.)

CURTIS MITCHELL—This artist's last exhibited work was quite skillful, if a bit familiar. The current installation—a screen of peeling paint, singed curtains, burned and cleansed rugs, and large sheets of paper run under tap water and hung like paintings—seems to be more his own, with interesting characteristics, but still clearly en route. The objects display a processy aesthetic and seem more like notations than completed thoughts. Through Nov. 21. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

TOM OTTERNESS—All of the pieces in this show are in bronze, and many of them are part of a commission in progress for Battery Park City. They are reminiscent of garden statuary, the sort inspired by children's fables that seem written for adults. Among the works on display are a water fountain with a bulldog chained to it, a street lamp with the Grim Reaper atop it, and a number of small Breughelian allegories—frog-footed rats transporting a bound cat, for example. Some of these wittily illustrated morality tales are socially specific: one recasts the story of Humpty-Dumpty as a parable of greed. A number of other works are biology driven, among them a broken DNA chain and a partially skeletal Neanderthal. All the forms are worked in Otterness's commanding W.P.A./doughboy style. The artist has never been afraid to think of his sculpture as decoration, and these works are the stronger for it. They are a pleasure to behold. Through Nov. 30. (Alexander, 59 Wooster St.)

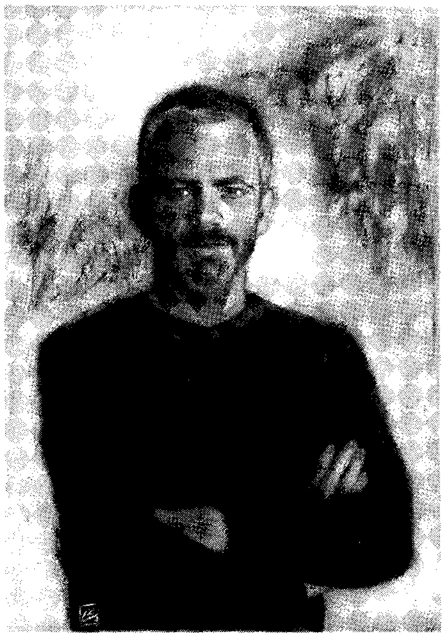
JAMES ROSENQUIST—New paintings of one picture seemingly cut into pieces, revealing another beneath it. There is an implicit power struggle in these works, which have an obvious sexual component. For better or for worse, the iconography is much more readable than in the past. The top images—in the earlier works, pictures of a young woman, usually identifiable by her eyes—have now been reduced to simple ribbons arcing across flowers. Rosenquist is an exquisite painter—one of our most underrated—but we are often distracted from this fact by his obsessive imagery. Through Nov. 17. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway.)

MYRON STOUT (1908–87)—Paintings and drawings from the artist's estate. Stout is a surprising artist. Best known for his neoplastic abstractions, he was nonetheless a brilliant representational draftsman—not unlike his younger colleague Ellsworth Kelly in this respect. Stout seems also to have been more of a spiritualist than is commonly acknowledged, rather in the tradition of theosophist painters such as Mondrian and the turn-of-the-century Swedish mystic Hilma af Klint. These varied, subtler currents in the Stout oeuvre are particularly apparent in a beautiful group of delicate and traditional landscape drawings that suggest a latter-day Ruysdael. Through Dec. 15. (Flynn, 113 Crosby St.)

RICHARD TUTTLE—Most artist-designed furniture is silly-looking, ludicrously uncomfortable, and outrageously expensive. Tuttle's living suite may be guilty of all this, but it is nonetheless quite engaging. His benches, chairs, and coffee table are designed in a pleasant Constructivist style and have been exquisitely crafted with Shaker simplicity. At the same time, they are overscale, like throne-room furniture, and they could make even the most poised adult feel a little like a child. This furniture is not about decorating; it's about creating a state of mind, a simultaneous hyperawareness of and alienation from the body. The set looks like a piece of interactive sculpture. Through Nov. 17. (A/D, 560 Broadway.)

MICHAEL ZWACK—Paintings that include images of faces, done in a murky, foggy style. They tend to dissolve at the bottom into drippy smears, and the over-all impact is of mirages that might disappear in the blink of an eye, or of veronica veils burnished on linen or paper in some extraordinarily vaporous way. Many seem to depict people from far-off lands, as if Zwack were a contemporary Orientalist imagining the exotic in the age of the fax. But however distantly the artist seems to cast for his images, his is a deeply internalized vision. The works are characterized by a powerful, deeply disturbing darkness, even when they are rendered in light colors. Through Nov. 24. (Marcus, 578 Broadway.)

SHORT LIST—**DONALD BAECHLER** and **FORD BECKMAN,** Shafrazi, 130 Prince St. (through Dec. 8); **DAVID BATES,** Cowles, 420 West Broadway (through Nov. 24); **SCOTT BURTON,** Protetch, 560 Broadway (through Dec. 1); **KEITH HARING,** Shafrazi, 163 Mercer St. (through Dec. 22); **MICHAEL LOEW,** Pearl, 420 West Broadway (through Nov. 24); **VINCENT LONGO,** Condeso-Lawler, 76 Greene St. (through Nov. 24); **STEPHEN MUELLER,** Nosei, 100 Prince St. (through Nov. 28); **JOSEPH RAFFAEL,** Hoffman, 429 West Broadway (through Dec. 12); **HAROLD SHAPINSKY,** Helander, 415 West Broadway (through Dec. 1); **JOEL SHAPIRO,** Cooper, 155 Wooster St. (through Dec. 1); **GAHAN WILSON,** Circle, 780 Seventh Ave., at 51st St. (through Nov. 19); **DAVID WOJNAROWICZ,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway (through Dec. 1).



Scott Burton at Protetch

PHOTOGRAPHY

WE saw the "New Photography" show at MOMA late in the afternoon. It was already dark out, and a chill cut the air. Months of winter gray loomed. Grim was our mood. We were the right customer for this exhibition.

There is not a speck of glamour to be found in any of these pictures, by the photographers Carl Pope, Paul D'Amato, and JoAnn Verburg. Instead, there's fat, sweat, dirt, poverty, alienation, self-defense. None of the pictures try to seduce the viewer. One of the pieces by Pope, in fact, shows anger toward the photographer right on its surface. Here we can see all too clearly how his subject, a homeless man, feels about being photographed: not good.

These three artists use the camera in an ambitious way. But we're not sure they succeed. Verburg's portraits are clearly "honest," but aren't they a bit pat? D'Amato's pictures are definitely strong, but aren't some of them a little set up in their Arbus-like undercurrents? And Pope's project on the homeless is undoubtedly well intentioned and non-stereotyping, but doesn't his tinting of some of the prints smack of artiness?

Despite these questions, the exhibition is engaging, even haunting. D'Amato's photo of rosebushes covered in plastic is particularly effective. It's a lyrical, beautiful image, breaking through the pessimism that characterizes the rest of the show.

SHORT LIST—**ILSE BING,** Min-Lowinsky, 584 Broadway (through Dec. 29); **JOHN DIVOLA,** Baum, 588 Broadway (through Nov. 24); **ADAM FÜSS,** Audiello, 142 Greene St. (through Nov. 17); **RAY METZKER,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through Nov. 21); **ANDRES SERRANO,** Stux, 155 Spring St. (through Dec. 8).

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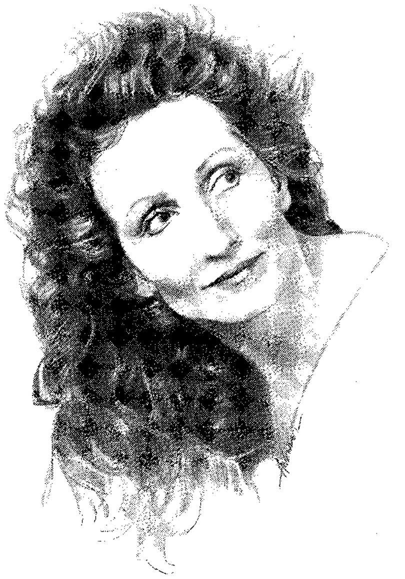
MUSIC

THE last time we saw Roberta Peters was a year ago, in a concert in the 92nd Street Y's "Schubertiade" series. The great chronological project was then—and still is—dealing with Schubert's sometimes sprawling and formless adolescent compositions; to Ms. Peters fell two of those dialogue songs that seem to go on for pages and pages, and that just don't get sung in public concerts. She had obviously taken these problem children to heart: she sang them seriously, with attention to all their shifts of tone; she had memorized the text and music, a *step not taken* by several of her colleagues in the series; and she made no attempt to impose superficially "effective" touches or to force the pieces to be a "success" that they could not be. We had the impression of a thoughtful, dedicated artist, modest in the right ways, and also resourceful.

The first time we saw Roberta Peters was years and years ago, when her name was a regular item on Metropolitan Opera cast lists, as Susanna in "The Marriage of Figaro." She was charming and simple and, oh, maybe a *bit* too cute for our taste, but definitely an ensemble player, an honest actress, and a lively presence on the stage, and her voice carried easily to the top and back of the hall (that's where we were). Ms. Peters goes back to the time when being a Met star meant that you spent the season in the city and sang lots of performances of several different roles; we had heard her on Saturday broadcasts as Lucia, *Gilda, Zerlina, and* various others before that first encounter, and heard (and saw) her as various others after. She sang at the house for thirty-five years, beginning in 1950, which makes her the recordholder among lyric coloraturas. Now she is going to sing a recital at Carnegie Hall (November 19), and we are going to hear her; we like these old-time singers who walk out knowing what they intend to do, and who don't seem to have to strain or reach—spiritually, we mean—to find the content of their songs. If she has to strain or reach for something vocally, we will understand; she has had a long career and has set her*self a big program*. She begins, in time-honored fashion, with *arie antiche*—old Italian arias from beloved anthologies—and there is an interesting Russian group at the end, including an aria from Rimsky-Korsakov's "Christmas Eve." In between: Schubert, Strauss, Thomas, and Mozart.



At the Met, Hildegard Behrens as Salome

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall 362-1911; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; and for the Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949.)

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—**LA TRAVIATA,** with Marilyn Mims, Jerry Hadley, and Juan Pons; conducted by Rico Saccani. (Nov. 12 and Nov. 21 at 8.) . . . With Marilyn Mims, Jerry Hadley, and Brian Schexnayder; Rico Saccani. (Nov. 17 at 1:30.) . . . **PORGY AND BESS,** with Priscilla Baskerville, Marvis Martin, Camellia Johnson, Larry Marshall, and Terry Cook; James Levine. (Nov. 13 and Nov. 16 at 7:30.) . . . **UN BALLO IN MASCHERA,** with Andrea Gruber, Harolyn Blackwell, Alexandrina Milcheva, Luciano Pavarotti, and Juan Pons; James Levine. (Nov. 14 and Nov. 17 at 8.) . . . With Aprile Millo, Harolyn Blackwell, Alexandrina Milcheva, Luciano Pavarotti, and Louis Quilico; Paul Nadler. (Nov. 20 at 8.) . . . **SALOME,** with Hildegard Behrens, Helga Dernesch, Richard Cassilly, and Ekkehard Wlaschiha; James Conlon. (Nov. 15 and Nov. 19 at 8:30.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA—*Final performances of the season.* **L'HEURE ESPAGNOLE** and **L'ENFANT ET LES SORTILÈGES,** a new production of the two short operas by Maurice Ravel, with Anna Steiger, Richard Byrne, Kevin Anderson, John Lankston, and Joseph McKee in the former, and Julia Parks featured in the latter; Guido Ajmone-Marsan conducts both operas. (Nov. 13 at 11 A.M., Nov. 15 at 8, and Nov. 17-18 at 2.) . . . With Kathryn Gamberoni, Robert Orth, Michael Rees Davis, Jonathan Green, and Jan Opalach in the former, and Robin Tabachnik in the latter; Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Nov. 14, Nov. 16, and Nov. 17, all at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

"FALSTAFF"—Verdi's final, ebullient comedy in a concert performance that features Thomas Stewart as the rotund title character. Edo de Waart directs the Minnesota Orchestra and a cast that also includes Barbara Daniels, Maureen Forrester, and Richard Cowan. Sung in Italian (with supertitles, for the first time in the hall's history). (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 15 at 8.)

CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY OPERA—The première of Lionel Lackey's "Wild Woody Thornton," based on Colonel Oliver North's escapades (conducted by Michel Singher and staged by Beth Greenberg); and Leonard Lehrman's "Super Spy," conducted by the composer. (Turtle Bay Music School, 244 E. 52nd St. Nov. 17 at 8 and Nov. 18 at 3:30. For information about tickets, call 678-5488.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall. Erich Leinsdorf conducts Debussy's "Martyre de St. Sébastien" Interludes, Stravinsky's "Symphonies of Winds" (dedicated to Debussy), and Beethoven's Third Symphony. (Nov. 13 at 8.) . . . ¶ Erich Leinsdorf conducts Copland's "Orchestral Variations," Beethoven's Third Symphony, and Ravel's Piano Concerto, with Cecile Licad. (Nov. 15-17 at 8 and Nov. 20 at 7:30.) . . . ¶ Charles Dutoit conducts Stravinsky's "Danses Concertantes," Debussy's "La Mer," and (with pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet) Liszt's "Totentanz" and Szymanowski's "Symphonie Concertante." (Nov. 21 at 8.)

ATLANTIC SINFONIETTA—Andrew Schenck conducts three ballet scores composed for dancer-choreographer Martha Graham: Hindemith's "Hérodiade," Menotti's "Errand Into the Maze," and William Schuman's "Night Journey." (St. Peter's

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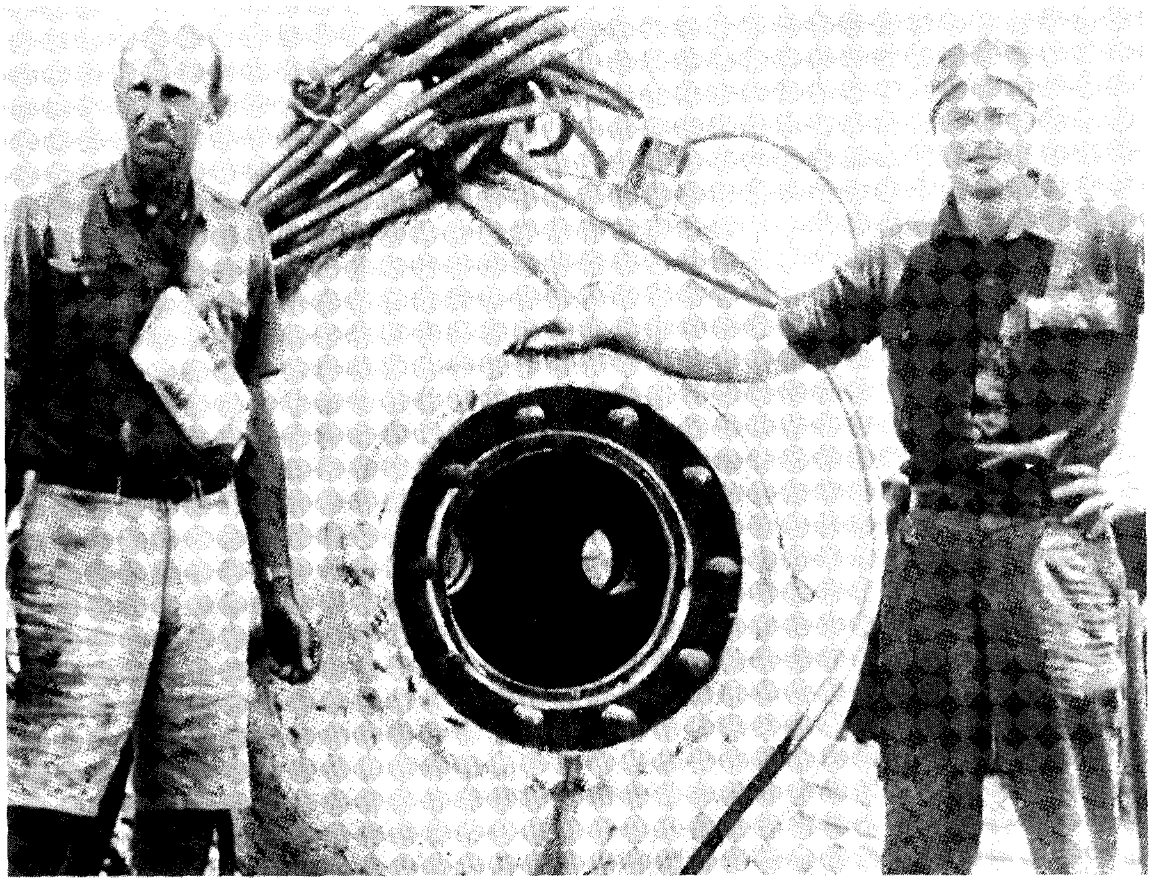

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MUSIC–Cont'd

Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Nov. 13 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Juilliard Orchestra—Music by David Diamond, including his Second and Fourth Symphonies and (with soloist Wendy Sutter), the New York première of his "Kaddish" for cello and orchestra, dedicated to the memory of Leonard Bernstein; conducted by Gerard Schwarz. (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 14 at 8.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson leads the orchestra in excerpts from operas and musical comedies, and Peter Mark conducts scenes from Bizet's "Carmen" (with mezzo-soprano Carol Sparrow and tenor Steven O'Mara). (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 16 at 8.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Gerard Schwarz conducts Schubert's Symphony No. 6 and Bernstein's "Serenade" (with violin soloist Dmitry Sitkovetsky), as well as Bright Sheng's "H'un (Lacerations: In Memoriam 1966-1976)," in which the composer, a New Yorker since 1982, expresses his feelings about the Cultural Revolution and its effect on his native China. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Nov. 17 at 8 and Nov. 18 at 3.)

Slovak Chamber Orchestra—The fourteen-member ensemble performs works by Vivaldi, Handel, Dvořák, and two lesser-known figures: Pieter Hellendaal (active in eighteenth-century Holland) and Ilja Zeljenka (a contemporary Slovak composer). (Metropolitan Museum. Nov. 17 at 8.)

Minnesota Orchestra—Edo de Waart conducts music by Beethoven and Irving Fine, and (with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg as soloist) Bruch's G-Minor Violin Concerto. (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 18 at 3.)

Mc Gill Symphony Orchestra—Timothy Vernon conducts the New York première of the "Symphony in F-Sharp, Op. 40," written in the early nineteen-fifties by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, as well as the U.S. première of "Plages," by the Canadian composer Serge Garont. Dudley Birder then directs Vivaldi's "Beatus Vir," with soloists Ollie Watts Davis and Pamela Hinchman (sopranos) and Steven Tharp (tenor). (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 18 at 8.)

EL DORADO

Recyclers, it turns out, love jam jars, but they're not so crazy about wine bottles. They can sell the clear glass back to the bottling companies, but the colored glass just hangs around, taking up space in landfills. Thus, in 1986, the city's brand-new recycling program resulted in an unfortunate colored-glass glut. The solution—jointly arrived at by the Sanitation and Transportation Departments—came two years later in the form of "glassphalt," asphalt that is about fifteen per cent crushed glass. It's economical, it's durable, and, best of all, it sparkles. The city's asphalt plant, in Brooklyn, has produced two hundred and eighty thousand tons of glassphalt (incorporating more than forty thousand tons of glass) since July of 1989—enough of the mixture to pave Broadway from Wall Street to the Bronx. The new paving material is particularly noticeable in Times Square, where the glass shards embedded in the streets reflect the flickering neon lights. Right now, glassphalt is used to pave and repair roads in Brooklyn and Manhattan, and D.O.T. Commissioner Lucius Riccio says that the city plans to build another glassphalt plant, in Queens, so that all the boroughs can shine. "This year," he says with some pride, "the tree in Rockefeller Center won't be the only thing that glitters."

"A German Requiem"—Robert Shaw directs Brahms' romantic masterpiece, culminating a week-long institute for professional choristers and conductors. With soprano Sylvia McNair, bass Samuel Ramey, the Carnegie Hall Centennial Chorus (composed of the hundred and twenty institute participants), the fifty-member Robert Shaw Festival Singers, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 18 at 3.)

Florilegium Chamber Choir—JoAnn Rice directs sacred works by Bach, Salomon Sultzer (a nineteenth-century Viennese cantor), Hugo Distler, and others; with soloists and a chamber orchestra. (German Church, 315 W. 22nd St. Nov. 18 at 3. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Sine Nomine Singers—Harry Saltzman directs music by Josquin, Clément Janequin, and Ludwig Senfl (including his motet "Ecce Quam Bonum," a favorite of Martin Luther's). (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 18 at 3.)

Collegium Antiquum—Mary Jane Newman directs a period-instrument orchestra and a twelve-member choir in Alessandro Scarlatti's "Mass for St. Cecilia's Day" and Monteverdi's "Missa in Illo Tempore." (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. Nov. 18 at 5. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

RECITALS

Bruce Brubaker—Piano, performing music by Haydn, Brahms, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and Edward Steuermann. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 12 at 8.)

D'Anna Fortunato and Alan Feinberg—The mezzo-soprano and the pianist are joined by the Orion String Quartet in a concert of American music from the opening decade of the twentieth century, including works by Ives, MacDowell, Loeffler, Amy Beach, and Arthur Farwell. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Nov. 13 at 8.)

Lark String Quartet—Playing music by Beethoven, Debussy, and Aaron Jay Kernis. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 13 at 8.)

Dawn Kotoski—Soprano, with pianist Warren Jones, performing songs and arias by Mozart, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Foster, and Poulenc. Also, three songs by Richard Hundley, including the première of "Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son" (with words from "Mother Goose"), a lengthy opus with flute obbligato played here by Eugenia Zukerman. Presented by Young Concert Artists. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Nov. 13 at 8.)

Speculum Musicae—The contemporary-music group plays pieces by Milton Babbitt, Robert Ceely, Ezequiel Viñao, and Poul Ruder. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 13 at 8.)

Frank Almond and Andreas Haefliger—The violinist and pianist perform sonatas by Mozart, Brahms, and Ravel. (Bösendorfer Center, 406 E. 79th St. Nov. 13 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Carlos Prieto—Cello, playing Bach and, with pianist Doris Stevenson, music by Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Manuel Ponce, Manuel Enríquez, Alberto Ginastera, and others. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 14 at 8.)

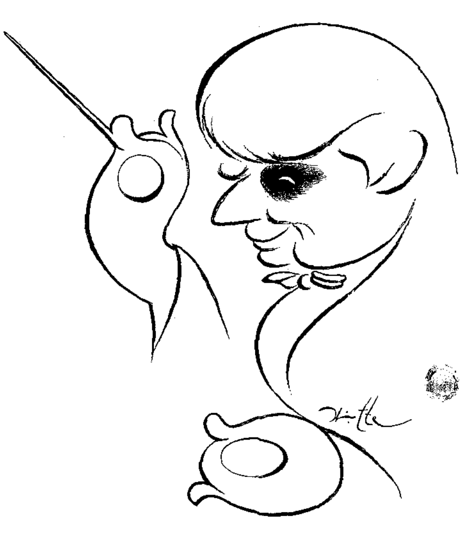
Oxana Yablonskaya and Dmitri Yablonsky—The mother-and-son piano-and-cello duo performs works by Schubert (the "Arpeggione" Sonata), Chopin, Rachmaninoff, and Lutoslawski. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 14 at 8.)

Jaakko Kortekangas—Baritone, with pianist Ilkka Paananen, performing songs by Wolf, Vaughan Williams, Tosti, Ture Rangström, and Toivo Kuula, who, by the time he died in 1918, at the age of only thirty-five, had established himself as a leading Finnish composer of the post-Sibelius generation. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 14 at 8.)

Bargemusic—A chamber ensemble plays music by Debussy and piano quartets by Mozart and Fauré. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Nov. 15 at 7:30 and Nov. 18 at 4.)

Parnassus—Chamber works by Schoenberg and Prokofiev, as well as recent compositions by Steve Rouse and Richard Rodney Bennett (the New York première of his "Five Sonnets of Louis Labé," with soprano Candace Goetz). (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Music from Marlboro—An evening of chamber music for strings, including a Mozart quartet and octets by Mendelssohn and Shostakovich. (Metropolitan Museum. Nov. 15 at 8. . . . ¶ Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 19 at 8.)



Robert Shaw conducts Brahms' "A German Requiem"

Ju Percussion Group—The fifteen-member Taiwanese ensemble presents original works and arrangements of traditional pieces, augmenting their vast array of standard percussion instruments with such exotica as Chinese gongs and tubular bells, Indonesian metal drums, a toy machine gun, wineglasses filled with water, and a whirligig—in total, a battery of two hundred scraped, pounded, rubbed, rattled, or shaken objects. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Mark Peskanov—The violinist, accompanied by pianist Rita Sloan, plays sonatas by Handel and Mozart; soprano Deborge Pinnington joins them for one of Mr. Peskanov's own compositions. (Metropolitan Museum. Nov. 16 at 7.)

Orford String Quartet—The group presents two late masterpieces in F major—Mozart's K. 590 and Beethoven's Op. 135—and the Fifth Quartet of the Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Nov. 16 at 8.)

Emanuel Vardi—Viola, playing music by Bach, Hindemith, De Falla, and Haydn, as well as his own "Fantasy Variations on a Theme of Paganini." (Hubbard Recital Hall, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Nov. 16 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Christopher Taylor—In his New York début recital, the winner of this year's William Kapell Piano Competition plays Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations, Albéniz's "Iberia, Book I," and works of Liszt and Messiaen. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 17 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Presenting music by Dvořák, Debussy, Stravinsky, and William Schuman. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 16 at 8 and Nov. 18 at 5.)

Cassatt String Quartet—The ensemble inaugurates a new series in an intimate venue, with works of Brahms, Dutilleux, and (with guest cellist Krzysztof Kielbasiewicz) Boccherini. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Nov. 18 at 3.)

Sylvan Winds—The wind nonet performs music by Giuseppe Maria Cambini, Mozart (who allowed that Cambini's music was all right, though he didn't care for the man), Schubert, Franz Lachner, and Bruce Adolphe. (Weill Recital Hall. Nov. 19 at 8.)

Joseph Fuchs—The violinist, who began st[illegible]ing his instrument in 1903 as therapy for a broken arm, performs sonatas by Nardini and Respighi, as well as two Brahms trios (*with assisting artists*). (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Nov. 19 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 874-7515.)

Roberta Peters—Soprano, with pianist Warren Jones. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 19 at 8.)

Gary Dranch—Clarinet, performing music by Mozart (the "Kegelstatt" Trio), Bartók ("Contrasts"), Martinů, and others, assisted by a chamber ensemble. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 19 at 8.)

Manuel Enríquez and Max Lifchitz—The two distinguished Mexican composers perform each others' works—Mr. Enríquez playing the violin and Mr. Lifchitz the piano—as well as music by such compatriots as Carlos Chávez and Manuel Ponce. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 20 at 8.)

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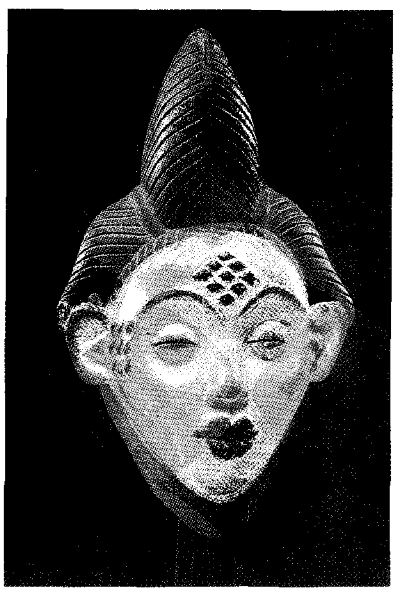

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JAZZ / POP / ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

JULEE CRUISE—The music of Angelo Badalamenti, when he collaborates with David Lynch, is all wet and dreamy—like the Pacific Northwest in fall. Julee Cruise, who renders Lynch's lyrics about floating and falling in a hushed, almost disembodied voice, sings like an angel who's ready to surrender to ecstasy. There's a kind of loopy sadness to the music this team creates—and all the finger snapping and synthetic three-o'clock-in-the-morning strings reinforce the ghostly feel of these songs about romantic involvement. This show is not a concert, it's a mood piece, and it recalls an ominously melancholy yesteryear where the car is old and the highway familiar and all the lights are out. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 15 at 8.)

DEAD CAN DANCE—No, they're not Oingo Boingo in disguise, and no, you can't dance to them. These guys are playing Gothic-cathedral music, synthesizing Gregorian chants, and they're very, very serious. Dead Can Dance want to be dark, stark, and mysterious, and sometimes they come close to an epiphany, but don't expect their music to lift your spirits. (Symphony Space. Nov. 20-21 at 8.)

BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS—The minimal musical riffs of B.D.P.—essentially Kris Parker (KRS-1), a twenty-three-year-old militant rapper—move at a slow, measured pace, like a protest march. His lyrics are not the run-of-the-mill street philosophy on fly-girls or the casual use of guns for armed robberies; instead, Parker is focussed on the importance of self-determination in a racist society. His new album, "Edutainment," is a course in African-American studies, where the *message* is the message, not the music. B.D.P. is not a party band, and if Parker's raps are more challenging than crowd-pleasing it's because his voice is one of the most powerful and uncompromising in rap music. (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. Nov. 16 at 7 and 11.)

COCTEAU TWINS—Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Nov. 13 at 8.

SPYRO GYRA—Beacon Theatre. Nov. 17 at 8.

ROBIN HOLCOMB—St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 1-718 858-2424. Nov. 17 at 8.

"MUSIC IN THE ARAB WORLD"—Simon Shaheen's Near Eastern Music Ensemble, with Ali Jihad Racy. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Nov. 17 at 8.)

POISON—Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. Nov. 18 at 8.

THE WATERBOYS—Beacon Theatre. Nov. 19-20 at 8.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK—Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. Nov. 20-21 at 7:30.

"FOLK MASTERS: TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN THE AMERICAS"—Nov. 13 at 8: The Badgett Sisters, Brother Theotis Taylor, and the McCollough Sons of Thunder Brass Band. . . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 8:30: Glenn Ohrlin, Doug Wallin, and the Johnson Mountain Boys. . . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 8: Cuerdas de Borinquen, José Quesada y los Cinco Diablos, and Irvan Perez. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

BENEFIT CONCERTS—Joan Baez, Cherish the Ladies, Geoff and Maria Muldaur, and James Taylor. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 16 at 7:30.) . . . ¶ Shankar, Trichy Sankaran, Zakir Hussain, and Caroline. (Symphony Space. Nov. 18 at 7.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

GIANTS—Vs. the Detroit Lions, Nov. 18 at 1.

JETS—Away until Nov. 25, when they face the Pittsburgh Steelers.

RANGERS—Vs. the Minnesota North Stars, Nov. 19 at 7:30.

ISLANDERS—Away until Nov. 22, when they meet the Winnipeg Jets.

DEVILS—Vs. the Montreal Canadiens, Nov. 13 at 7:45. . . . ¶ Vs. the Hartford Whalers, Nov. 15 at 7:45. . . . ¶ Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, Nov. 17 at 1:35.

KNICKS—Vs. the Philadelphia 76ers, Nov. 17 at 8:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Houston Rockets, Nov. 20 at 8.

NETS—Vs. the Washington Bullets, Nov. 12. . . . ¶ Vs. the Milwaukee Bucks, Nov. 14. . . . ¶ Vs. the Detroit Pistons, Nov. 16. (Game time, 7:30.)

(The Giants play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands; for information about tickets, call 1-201 935-8111. The Rangers and the Knicks play at Madison Square Garden, 563-8300; and the Devils and the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

HORSES—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30. . . . **TROTTING** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8, and Tuesdays at 1.

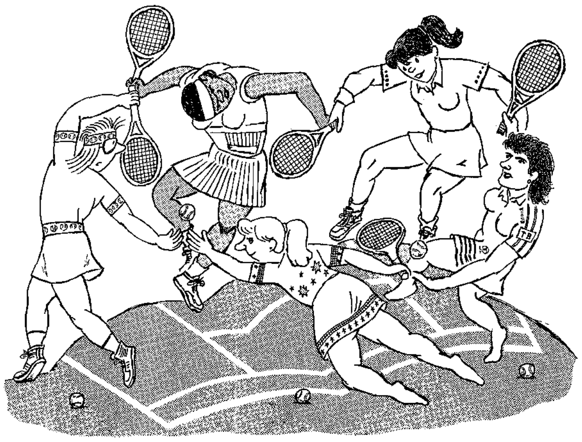
CHAMPIONSHIP—TENNIS

VIRGINIA SLIMS TOURNAMENT—Navratilova, Garrison, Capriati, Sabatini, Graf, and eleven other top-seeded women battle for points in Madison Square Garden. The matches start on Nov. 12 at 5 and finish with the finals, Nov. 18 at 1. For information about tickets, call 465-6500.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

PRE-YULE—Before the Thanksgiving turkey's even seen the inside of the oven, some of Manhattan's more foresighted institutions are getting the jump on Christmas. The Museum of Natural History erects and illuminates its fir tree covered with origami ornaments on Nov. 19 at 3 (call 769-5100); the adjacent Hayden Planetarium begins its Star of Bethlehem show on Nov. 21 (call 769-5920); and the Empire State Building has a spruced-up lobby (call 736-3100).

JAMES—Claire Bloom will perform a dramatic reading of Henry James's "Turn of the Screw," in a benefit for the Hunter College Playhouse. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. Nov. 15 at 8. For information about tickets, call 772-4448.)



The Virginia Slims Tennis Tournament

PEAKING—Mark Frost, Jennifer Lynch, Dana Ashbrook, and others in the "Twin Peaks" crew will discuss the metaphysical aspects of the weekly television drama, which both defies and conforms to the soap-opera genre. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Nov. 17 at 1.)

GOODIES—Jack Nicholson's glove from his Joker role, Tom Cruise's wheelchair from his Ron Kovic role, and a high-top sneaker signed by Magic Johnson are among the oddities to be sold at this benefit auction. (Sports on Broadway, Broadway at 77th St. Nov. 15. Bidding begins at 7:30.)

READINGS AND A TALK—Nov. 15 at 8: Mark Rudman and Molly Peacock read from their own poetry. (Loeb Student Center Auditorium, New York University, Washington Sq. and LaGuardia Pl. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 8: Art Spiegelman, Garry Trudeau, and Signe Wilkinson talk about cartooning, with Adam Gopnik as the moderator. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. For information about tickets, call 787-6557.) . . . ¶ Nov. 19 at 8:30: Reynolds Price reads from his new novel, "The Tongues of Angels." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.) . . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 8: Joyce Hanson and Sarah E. Wright read from their own prose. (West Side Y, 5 W. 63rd St. 787-6557.)

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 37.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "To Sleep with Anger" (†).
Theatre 2: "Metropolitan" (directed by Whit Stillman).
Theatre 3: "Akira Kurosawa's Dreams" (†).
Theatre 4: "Leningrad Cowboys Go America" (Aki Kaurismäki; in English and Finnish).
Theatre 5: "C'est la Vie" (Diane Kurys), with Nathalie Baye and Richard Berry.
Theatre 6: "Tune in Tomorrow . . ." (Jon Amiel), with Barbara Hershey, Keanu Reeves, and Peter Falk.

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through Nov. 18: "The Nun" ("La Religieuse"; 1965, Jacques Rivette; in French).
Nov. 19: Theatre closed.
From Nov. 20: "Lola" (†).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 15: "Miller's Crossing" (†). From Nov. 16: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 2: "Avalon" (†).
Theatre 3: "GoodFellas" (†).

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 20: "GoodFellas" (†). From Nov. 21: "Hidden Agenda" (Ken Loach), with Frances McDormand, Brian Cox, and Brad Dourif.

Scott Paulin, Dennis Quaid, Ed Harris, Scott Glenn, Fred Ward, Lance Henriksen, and Charles Frank in "The Right Stuff"

Theatre 2: "Dances with Wolves" (Kevin Costner), with Costner.
Theatre 3: "Avalon" (†).
Theatre 4: "Reversal of Fortune" (†).
Theatre 5: "Jacob's Ladder" (Adrian Lyne), with Tim Robbins.
Theatre 6: Through Nov. 15: "Dances with Wolves." From Nov. 16: "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
Through Nov. 20: "Fantasia" (†).
From Nov. 21: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Sibling Rivalry" (Carl Reiner).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 15: "Graveyard Shift" (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews. From Nov. 16: "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.
Theatre 2: "Ghost" (†).
Theatre 3: "Child's Play 2" (John Lafia), with Alex Vincent.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"White Palace" (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
Through Nov. 20: "Listen Up: The Lives of Quincy Jones" (Ellen Weissbrod), a documentary.
From Nov. 21: "The Nutcracker Prince" (Paul Schibli), an animated film.

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 20: "Fantasia" (†). From Nov. 21: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.
Theatre 2: "Tune in Tomorrow . . ." (Jon Amiel), with Barbara Hershey, Keanu Reeves, and Peter Falk.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
Through Nov. 20: "Pacific Heights" (†).
From Nov. 21: "Predator 2" (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
Through Nov. 15: "Waiting for the Light" (Christopher Monger).
From Nov. 16: "Cyrano de Bergerac" (Jean-Paul Rappeneau; in French), with Gérard Depardieu.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Child's Play 2" (John Lafia), with Alex Vincent.
Theatre 2: "Ghost" (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Sibling Rivalry" (Carl Reiner).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 15: "Henry & June" (†). From Nov. 16: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 2: "Miller's Crossing" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 20: "GoodFellas" (†). From Nov. 21: "Mr. and Mrs. Bridge" (James Ivory), with Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward.
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 15: "Graffiti Bridge" (Prince), with Prince. From Nov. 16: "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film.
Theatre 3: "My Twentieth Century" (Ildiko Enyedi; in Hungarian).

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Avalon" (†).
Theatre 2: "Jacob's Ladder" (Adrian Lyne), with Tim Robbins.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"The Krays" (Peter Medak), with Gary Kemp and Martin Kemp.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 15: "Graveyard Shift" (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews. From Nov. 16: "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 20: "Memphis Belle" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Matthew Modine. From Nov. 21: "Hidden Agenda" (Ken Loach).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Reversal of Fortune" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Dances with Wolves" (Kevin Costner), with Costner.

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
Through Nov. 15: "Henry & June" (†).
From Nov. 16: "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 20: "Marked for Death" (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal, Joanna Pacula, and Keith David. From Nov. 21: "Predator 2" (Stephen Hopkins), with Dany Glover and Gary Busey.
Theatre 2: "Child's Play 2" (John Lafia), with Alex Vincent.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 20: "Graffiti Bridge" (Prince), with Prince. From Nov. 21: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: "Baxter" (1988, directed by Jerome Boivin; in French), with Lise Delamare.
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "Akira" (Katsuhiro Otomo), a Japanese animated science-fiction film.

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "White Palace" (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.
Theatre 2: "The Krays" (Peter Medak), with Gary Kemp and Martin Kemp.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"Reversal of Fortune" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Henry & June" (†).
Theatre 2: "Child's Play 2" (John Lafia), with Alex Vincent.

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 20: "Graffiti Bridge" (Prince), with Prince. From Nov. 21: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 15: "My Twentieth Century" (Ildiko Enyedi; in Hungarian). From Nov. 16: "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film.
Theatre 3: "Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian).
Theatre 4: "Jacob's Ladder" (Adrian Lyne), with Tim Robbins.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "Waiting for the Light" (Christopher Monger), with Shirley MacLaine and Teri Garr; and (evenings only) "Pacific Heights" (†).
Theatre 2: "Henry & June" (†).
Theatre 3: "Miller's Crossing" (†).
Theatre 4: "Postcards from the Edge" (†).
Theatre 5: "Sibling Rivalry" (Carl Reiner), with Kirstie Alley.
Theatre 6: "White Palace" (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.
Theatre 7: "Child's Play 2" (John Lafia), with Alex Vincent.
Theatre 8: Through Nov. 15: "Memphis Belle" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Matthew Modine. From Nov. 16: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 9: "The Krays" (Peter Medak), with Gary Kemp and Martin Kemp.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Marked for Death" (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal.
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 15: "Graffiti Bridge" (Prince), with Prince. From Nov. 16: "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film.
Theatre 3: "The Return of Superfly" (Sig Shore), with Nathan Purdee.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
Through Nov. 15: "Fantasia" (†).
From Nov. 16: "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "Henry & June" (†).
Theatre 2: "Child's Play 2" (John Lafia), with Alex Vincent.
Theatre 3: "Marked for Death" (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal.
Theatre 4: "Avalon" (†).
Theatre 5: "Waiting for the Light" (Christopher Monger), with Shirley MacLaine and Teri Garr.
Theatre 6: "Sibling Rivalry" (Carl Reiner), with Kirstie Alley.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"White Palace" (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
Through Nov. 15: "Metropolitan" (Whit Stillman).
From Nov. 16: "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"Reversal of Fortune" (†).

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
"C'est la Vie" (Diane Kurys), with Nathalie Baye and Richard Berry.

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)
"Miller's Crossing" (†).

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"Vincent & Theo" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Postcards from the Edge" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Dances with Wolves" (Kevin Costner), with Costner.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Sibling Rivalry" (Carl Reiner), with Kirstie Alley.

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "The Nasty Girl" (Michael Verhoeven; in German), with Lena Stolze.
Theatre 2: "Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian).
Theatre 3: "L'Atalante" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
Through Nov. 20: "Postcards from the Edge" (†).
From Nov. 21: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Jacob's Ladder" (Adrian Lyne), with Tim Robbins.
Theatre 2: "The Krays" (Peter Medak), with Gary Kemp and Martin Kemp.
Theatre 3: Through Nov. 15: "Graveyard Shift" (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews. From Nov. 16: "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.
Theatre 4: "Reversal of Fortune" (†).
Theatre 5: Through Nov. 20: "GoodFellas" (†). From Nov. 21: "Hidden Agenda" (Ken Loach), with Frances McDormand, Brian Cox, and Brad Dourif.
Theatre 6: "Avalon" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 15: "Henry & June" (†). From Nov. 16: "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film.
Theatre 2: "White Palace" (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 20: "Graffiti Bridge" (Prince), with Prince. From Nov. 21: "Predator 2" (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey.
Theatre 2: "Child's Play 2" (John Lafia), with Alex Vincent.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Return of Superfly" (directed by Sig Shore), with Nathan Purdee.
Theatre 3: Through Nov. 20: "King of New York" (Abel Ferrara), with Christopher Walken. From Nov. 21: "The Nutcracker Prince" (Paul Schibli), an animated film.
Theatre 4: Through Nov. 20: "Guns." From Nov. 21: "Predator 2" (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey.
Theatre 5: "The Krays" (Peter Medak), with Gary Kemp and Martin Kemp.
Theatre 6: "Pacific Heights" (†).

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
Through Nov. 20: "Mr. Destiny" (James Orr), with James Belushi.
From Nov. 21: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 14: "The Hot Spot" (Dennis Hopper), with Don Johnson. From Nov. 15: "Graveyard Shift" (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews.
Theatre 2: "Death Warrant" (Deran Saradian), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.
Theatre 3: "Ghost" (†).

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
Through Nov. 14: "Graveyard Shift" (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews. (No performances Nov. 12.)
Nov. 15: Theatre closed.
From Nov. 16: "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Marked for Death" (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal.
Theatre 2: "Child's Play 2" (John Lafia), with Alex Vincent.

West Side Cinema 1 and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)
Theatre 1: "Graffiti Bridge" (Prince), with Prince.
Theatre 2: "Graffiti Bridge."

During the première engagement of "Kiss Me Kate" (playing November 16-22 at the Film Forum 2), the sight of Ann Miller performing "Too Darn Hot" in "the tightest tights the film code permits" prompted one critic to quip, "I know now why 3-D was invented." The one remaining 3-D print for this bright if bowdlerized adaptation of Cole Porter's witty, tuneful musical has been making its way cross-country, so that nineties audiences can see what drew crowds in 1953. Miller tosses one of her accessories smack at the audience. But her performance has more than gimmick value: her zest in the role of night-club stripper Lois Lane, who plays Bianca in a musical version of "The Taming of the Shrew," helps put back some of the oomph removed by Hollywood sanitation.

Directed by George Sidney, and adapted by Dorothy Kingsley from Sam and Bella Spewack's book, the movie is a slow starter. Perhaps to lend an aura of knowingness, the filmmakers turned Porter himself into an innocuous character played by Ron Randell. He shows up at the apartment of matinée idol/director Fred Graham (Howard Keel) to introduce the score to Graham's ex-wife and possible leading lady, Lilli Vanessi (Kathryn Grayson). The songs are splendid, but the sequence exists to spell out the romantic tensions among the cheerful gold-digger Lois, the high-toned Lilli, and the likably egotistical Fred (one of Keel's prime, humorously robust performances). The film doesn't get up on its feet until the scene shifts to the theatre—that's where Miller gets some legroom, along with Tommy Rall, Bob Fosse, Bobby Van, and Carol Haney. That's where the 3-D is most effective, too; it gives you a kicky sense of stage depth. Even then, the process can have wearying side effects. It causes small scratches on the print to register like asteroid belts.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
Nov. 12: "Susan and God" (1940, directed by George Cukor), with Joan Crawford, Fredric March, Ruth Hussey, John Carroll, and Rita Hayworth; and "Escape" (1940, Mervyn LeRoy), with Norma Shearer.
Nov. 13-14: "Castle on the Hudson" (1940, Anatole Litvak), with John Garfield, Ann Sheridan, Pat O'Brien, and Burgess Meredith; and "Johnny Apollo" (1940, Henry Hathaway), with Tyrone Power.
Nov. 15-17: "Gaslight" (1940, Thorold Dickinson), with Diana Wynyard, Anton Walbrook, and Robert Newton; and "All This, and Heaven Too" (1940, Anatole Litvak), with Bette Davis, Charles Boyer, Jeffrey Lynn, and Barbara O'Neil.
Nov. 18-19: "Irene" (†); and "Little Nellie Kelly" (1940, Norman Taurog), with Judy Garland, George Murphy, and Charles Winninger.
Nov. 20-21: "Phantom Raiders" (1940, Jacques Tourneur), with Walter Pidgeon; "Murder in the Air" (1940, Lewis Seiler), with Lya Lys, Ronald Reagan, John Litel, and Eddie Foy, Jr.; and "Murder Over New York" (1940, Harry Lachman), with Sidney Toler as Charlie Chan.

Cinema Village, 3rd Ave. between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)
Through Nov. 13: "Ran" (1985, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Mieko Harada, Tatsuya Nakadai, Peter, and Hisashi Ikawa.
Nov. 14-17: "Murmur of the Heart" (1971, Louis Malle; in French), with Léa Massari, Benoit Ferreux, Daniel Gélin, and Michel Lonsdale; and "Au Revoir les Enfants" ("Goodbye, Children"; 1987, Louis Malle; in French), with Gaspard Manesse, Raphaël Fejtö, Francine Racette, and François Négret.
Nov. 18-20: "Last Exit to Brooklyn" (19[illegible] Uli Edel), with Stephen Land and Jennifer Jason Leigh; and "The Handmaid's Tale" (1990, Volker Schlöndorff), with Natasha Richardson, Faye Dunaway, Robert Duvall, and Aidan Quinn.
From Nov. 21: "Jean de Florette" (1985, Claude Berri; in French), with Yves Montand, Gérard Depardieu, Elisabeth Depardieu, and Daniel Auteuil; and "Manon of the Spring" (1987, Berri; in French), with Montand, Auteuil, and Emmanuelle Béart.

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Nov. 12: "Rock All Night" (1957, Roger Corman), with Dick Miller, Abby Dalton, Russell Johnson, and Jonathan Haze; and "Shake, Rattle, and Rock" (1956, Edward L. Cahn), with Michael Connors, Sterling Holloway, Lisa Gay, and Fats Domino.
Nov. 13: "The Gunslinger" (1956, Roger Corman), with John Ireland, Beverly Garland, and Allison Hayes; "Apache Woman" (1955, Corman), with Lloyd Bridges, Joan Taylor, and Lance Fuller; and "The Oklahoma Woman" (1955, Corman), with Richard Denning, Peggie Castle, Cathy Downs, Michael Connors, Jonathan Haze, and Dick Miller.
Nov. 14-15: "Dragstrip Girl" (1957, Edward L. Cahn), with John Ashley, Steve Terrell, Fay Spain, and Frank Gorshin; "Motorcycle Gang" (1957, Cahn), with Terrell, Ann Neyland, Ashley, and Carl Switzer; and "Female Jungle" (1955, Bruno Ve Sota), with Jayne Mansfield, Lawrence Tierney, John Carradine, Kathleen Crowley, and Ve Sota.
From Nov. 16: "Kiss Me Kate" (see blurb in center column).

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Nov. 12: "The Threepenny Opera" (1931, G. W. Pabst; in German), with Lotte Lenya; and "The Blue Angel" (1929, Josef von Sternberg; in German), with Marlene Dietrich, Emil Jannings, and Hans Albers.
Nov. 13: "Gothic" (1987, Ken Russell), with Gabriel Byrne, Julian Sands, Natasha Richardson, and Miriam Cyr; and "The Devils" (1971, Russell), with Vanessa Redgrave and Oliver Reed.
Nov. 14: "Libeled Lady" (1936, Jack Conway), with Jean Harlow, William Powell, Myrna Loy, and Spencer Tracy; and "Love Crazy" (1941, Conway), with Powell, Myrna Loy, Gail Patrick, Jack Carson, and Florence Bates.
Nov. 15: "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner" (1962, Tony Richardson), with Michael Redgrave, Tom Courtenay, and Alec McCowen; and "The Loved One" (1965, Richardson), with Robert Morse.
Nov. 16-17: "Beauty and the Beast" ([illegible]6, Jean Cocteau; in French), with Jean Marais, Josette Day, Marcel André, and Michel Auclair; and "Black Orpheus" (1959, Marcel Camus; a Brazilian film, in Portuguese), with Marpessa Dawn.
Nov. 18: "East of Eden" (1955, Elia Kazan), with Julie Harris, James Dean, Raymond Massey, and Richard Davalos; and "Rebel Without a Cause" (1955, Nicholas Ray), with Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo, Corey Allen, and Nick Adams.
Nov. 19: "Alphaville" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Eddie Constantine, Anna Karina, and Akim Tamiroff; and "Le Gai Savoir" (1968, Godard; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud.
Nov. 20: "A Slight Case of Murder" (1938, Lloyd Bacon), with Edward G. Robinson, Allen Jenkins, Jane Bryan, and Ruth Donnelly; and "Arsenic and Old Lace" (1944, Frank Capra), with Cary Grant,

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MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

Priscilla Lane, Raymond Massey, Peter Lorre, Josephine Hull, and Jean Adair. Nov. 21: "Marathon Man" (†) and "The Boys from Brazil" (†).

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Nov. 13 at 6: "A Short Film About Killing" (1988, directed by Krzysztof Kieslowski; in Polish).... ¶ Nov. 15 at 3 and 6: "To Know Where They Are" (1989, Terri Randall) and "Witness: Anti-Semitism in Poland, 1946" (1989, Marcel Lozinsky), both documentaries.... ¶ Nov. 15 at 6: "A Short Film About Love" (1988, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in Polish).... ¶ Nov. 16 at 2:30: "Double Trouble" (1967, Norman Taurog), with Elvis Presley, Annette Day, and John Williams.... ¶ Nov. 16 at 6: "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" (†).... ¶ Nov. 17 at 2: "Raging Bull" (1980, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Joe Pesci, and Cathy Moriarty.... ¶ Nov. 17 at 5: "The Right Stuff" (†).... ¶ Nov. 18 at 2: "Rocky" (1976, John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire, and Burt Young. ... ¶ Nov. 18 at 5: "New York, New York" (1977, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Liza Minnelli, and Lionel Stander.... ¶ Nov. 19 at 2:30: "The Strawberry Statement" (1970, Stuart Hagmann), with Bruce Davison, Kim Darby, and Bob Balaban.... ¶ Nov. 19 at 6: "The New Centurions" (1972, Richard Fleischer), with George C. Scott, Stacy Keach, and Jane Alexander.... ¶ Nov. 19 at 6:30: A program of films by Warren Sonbert, who will be present.

Museum of Broadcasting, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—"MB Playhouse," dramas shown on television over the past thirty years. Nov. 13-17: Jean Anouilh's "Antigone" (1974, WNET), with Geneviève Bujold.... From Nov. 20: Dorothy Parker's "Big Blonde" (1980, PBS), with Sally Kellerman. Showings Tuesdays at 3 and 6, Wednesdays through Fridays at 3, and Saturdays at 1.... ¶ Programs about contemporary comedians, and people who influenced them. Whoopi Goldberg: Nov. 13-14: "Whoopi Goldberg ... Direct from Broadway" (1985, HBO); and "The Ernie Kovacs Show" (1956, NBC). Nov. 15-17: Excerpts from Goldberg's television work; "Mirror Image" (1960, CBS), an episode of "The Twilight Zone"; and highlights from shows that influenced Goldberg. Showings Tuesdays at 12:15 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 12:15.

Anthology Film Archives, 32-34 Second Ave., at Second St. (477-2714)—Films showing in either the Courthouse Theatre or the Maya Deren Theatre. Nov. 12-13 at 10:30: "Antigone" (1989, Amy Greenfield), with Bertram Ross, Janet Eilber, and Greenfield.... ¶ Nov. 12-14 at 7: "Man No Run" (1988, Claire Denis).... ¶ Episodes of Robert Altman's television show "Tanner '88," with Michael Murphy in the title role. Nov. 12 at 8:30: Episodes 1 and 2: "Dark Horse" and "For Real." ... Nov. 13 at 8:30: Episodes 3A, 3B, 4A, and 4B: "Moonwalker and Bookbag," "Bagels with Bruce," "Child's Play," and "The Great Escape." ... Nov. 14 at 8:30: Episodes 5A, 5B, 6A, and 6B: "The Girl Friend Factor," "Something Borrowed, Something New," "The Boiler Room," and "The Reality Check." ... ¶ Nov. 14 at 6:30 and Nov. 16 at 10:30: "Signed: Lino Brocka" (1988, Christian Blackwood), a documentary. ... ¶ Nov. 14-15 at 8:30: "Manila in the Claws of Neon" (1975, Lino Brocka).... ¶ Nov. 15 at 7, Nov. 16-18 at 7 and 9, and Nov. 19-21 at 7: "Border Radio" (1988, Allison Anders, Kurt Voss, and Dean Lent).... ¶ Nov. 16 at 5:15: "Dung-Aw" (1975, Lino Brocka).... ¶ Nov. 17 at 3:30: "Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa" (1974, Lino Brocka).... ¶ Nov. 17 at 10:30: "Insiang" (1976, Lino Brocka).... ¶ Nov. 17-21 at 7, 8:30, and 10: Three different programs of European videos.... ¶ Nov. 18 at 2: "The Three Faces of Eve" (1957, Nunnally Johnson), with Joanne Woodward and Lee J. Cobb.... ¶ Nov. 18 at 5: "Bayan Ko" (1984, Lino Brocka).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Nov. 14 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Too Beautiful for You" (1989, Bertrand Blier; in French), with Gérard Depardieu, Carole Bouquet, Josiane Balasko, and Roland Blanche. ... ¶ Nov. 21 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "L'Etat Sauvage" (1978, Francis Girod; in French), with Marie-Christine Barrault, Claude Brasseur, Jacques Dutronc, and Michel Piccoli.

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—Nov. 16 at 6:30 and 8:30: "Sand Castle" (1989, Junichi Suzuki; in Japanese).

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 81st St. (879-5500)—Nov. 17 at 4 and 6:30: "Different Sunrise" (1943, Julio Bracho; in Spanish), with Pedro Armendáriz and Andrea Palma.

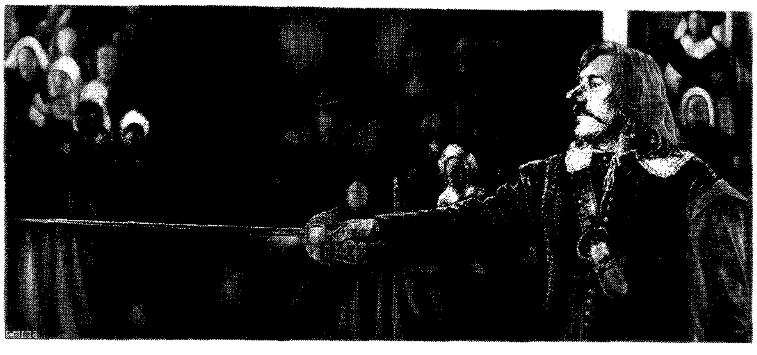
American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—In either the Riklis Theatre or the Warner Communications Screening Room: "Red Scare! Soviet Communism in American Film and Television, 1909-88." Nov. 14-16 at 2: "Army Infiltration" (1953), an episode of "I Led 3 Lives," with Richard Carlson; "Black Lead" (1953), an episode of "Biff Baker, U.S.A.," with Alan Hale, Jr.; and "Red Tentacles" (1952), an episode of "Sky King," with Kirby Grant.... ¶ Nov. 17 at 2: "Big Jim McLain" (1952, Edward Ludwig), with John Wayne, Nancy Olson, and James Arness.... ¶ Nov. 17 at 4: "Jet Pilot" (1957, Josef von Sternberg), with John Wayne and Janet Leigh.... ¶ Nov. 18 at 2: "Rambo III" (1988, Peter MacDonald), with Sylvester Stallone.... ¶ Nov. 18 at 4: "Firefox" (1982, Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood.... ¶ Nov. 17-18 at 1 and 3 and Nov. 21 and 23 at 2: "Rendezvous in Prague" (1952), an episode of "The Hunter," with Barry Nelson; "Tanya Tamar" (1955), an episode of "The Man Called X," with Barry Sullivan; and "The Camp" (1956), an episode of "The Crusader," with Brian Keith.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Terrence Rafferty.)

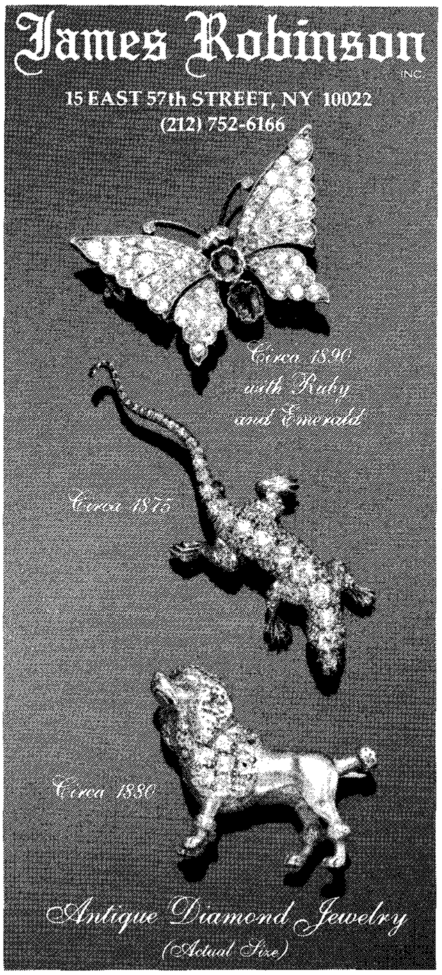
Akira Kurosawa's Dreams—Not one of its eight segments feels like a real dream. The kind of power that Kurosawa aims for, and intermittently achieves, in this picture is less oneiric than ceremonial. The film is a succession of sweeping dramatic gestures and lofty incantations performed in an atmosphere of hushed solemnity. The second half of "Dreams" is weak: the fifth episode, "Crows," about a fantasy encounter with van Gogh, is a thin conceit; and the remaining three segments are all static, self-conscious, and didactic. But there's greatness in the film's first hour. The opening segment, "Sunshine Through the Rain," is the vision of a small child who wanders into a forest and witnesses a wedding procession of foxes; the sequence has a wholly original sense of the rapturous fear and awe we feel when we first come upon the wonders of the natural world. The second episode, "The Peach Orchard," is also lovely (though its mood and pace are too similar to those of the first). The third segment, "The Blizzard," about four men trapped in a snowstorm, is all snow, howling-wind effects, and bleak, undifferentiated vistas of despair, until Kurosawa pulls a miracle out of the white void: a woman in long black hair and diaphanous robes appears to the party's leader as he battles sleep. It's a transcendent image, perhaps the most piercing ever made of the desires that keep people from surrendering to death. And the fourth episode, "The Tunnel," about a man returning from war and encountering his dead comrades, is a brilliant, hypnotic piece of filmmaking. With Akira Terao, who plays the dreamer in six of the segments; Mieko Harada as the Snow Fairy; Martin Scorsese as van Gogh; and Chishu Ryu. Cinematography by Takao Saito and Masaharu Ueda. In Japanese.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/10/90.) (Angelika Film Center.)



At the Plaza, Gérard Depardieu in "Cyrano de Bergerac"

L'Atalante (1934)—This extraordinary film was the only full-length feature directed by Jean Vigo, who died (at the age of twenty-nine) just three weeks after its première in 1934. The movie had been drastically cut by the distributor for that first release; it was partially restored in 1940, and it has now been given another major renovation. This version, prepared by Pierre Philippe and Jean-Louis Bompoint, adds about nine minutes of footage, and the restorers discovered a pristine nitrate print of a cut of the movie which obviously preceded the distributor's intervention: Vigo's film now looks and sounds better than ever. The screenplay, rewritten by Vigo and Albert Riéra from an original scenario by Jean Guinée, tells the simple story of a pair of newlyweds named Jean (Jean Dasté) and Juliette (Dita Parlo): he's the captain of a river barge called L'Atalante, and she's a girl from one of the villages on his route. As they travel down the river, they become impatient with each other; they are separated, then find each other again, and life resumes its intended course. Vigo treats the story the way a jazz musician treats a popular song, improvising on the melody by plunging into its carefully sequenced chords and predictable rhythms and taking them apart to see what they're made of. He is the most playful and the least rigid of the great film artists: his images seduce us with the promise of a larger, richer world and unbounded freedom to roam in it—the promise, that is, of endless stimulation, inexhaustible sensations. The best thing about this new version is that, for all the restorers' diligence, the film is still messy, imperfect, defiantly incomplete; it's a collection of inspired fragments, the sketchbook of an artist whose imagination was, and will forever remain, gloriously immature. Michel Simon plays a rambunctious old salt called Père Jules, who is the presiding spirit of the movie. Also with Louis Lefèvre and Gilles Margaritis. The stunning cinematography is by Boris Kaufman; Maurice Jaubert wrote the lovely score. In French.—T.R. (11/5/90) (Lincoln Plaza.)

Avalon—In legend, Avalon is an earthly paradise. The writer-director Barry Levinson uses the name as his Rosebud: it's carved into the façade of the castlelike Baltimore apartment house where the five Krichinsky brothers, Jews who immigrated from Eastern Europe before the First World War, make their first American home. In Levinson's view, those early years were a golden age. The film is set mostly during his own childhood, in the late forties, when his parents move to the suburbs, and TV breaks up the clan's social patterns, and the surviving brothers have divided into feuding factions. The scattered fine comic moments don't make up for the wide streak



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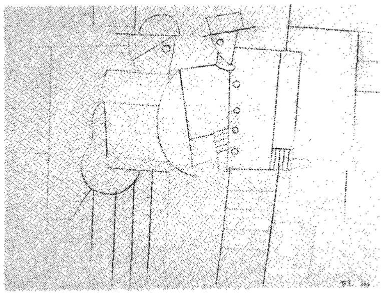
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of fuddy-duddyism in the notion that the family used to be the bulwark of the nation's value system. The movie is an elegy to a mythical past, and people emerge from the theatre sniffling. They've been told they're suffering from soul-sickness—the loss of unity, harmony, family music. With Elizabeth Perkins, Aidan Quinn, Kevin Pollak, Armin Mueller-Stahl, and Joan Plowright.—P.K. *(10/22/90)* (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Worldwide Cinemas, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

The Boys from Brazil (1978)—Franklin J. Schaffner's large-scale version of Ira Levin's novel about Nazi experiments in cloning is too logy and literal-minded for suspense, and when an actor like Gregory Peck plays a sadistic Nazi geneticist and speaks in an arch-villain's sibilant German accent, you can't keep from laughing. Peck, in his jungle hideaway, staring into the future as he walks unconcernedly among the mutants he has created, just doesn't have it in him to inspire primitive terror; his effects are all on the surface, and he looks particularly bad because he's playing opposite Laurence Olivier, who is the aged hero, a famous Nazi-hunter (a fictional counterpart of Simon Wiesenthal). Olivier does a flirtatious impersonation of such actors as the late Albert Basserman and Felix Bressart, with their querulous, whiny voices and their way of seeming almost helpless yet resourceful, sagacious, and totally *good.* He takes off on this cloying humanistic style just enough to be very funny, and then, in the key sequences, he rises above his Viennese singsongy charm and demonstrates that the harmless-old-bore act of the aged can be a way of saving oneself for the things that count. With James Mason, and an enormous international cast that includes Rosemary Harris, Bruno Ganz, Uta Hagen, Lilli Palmer, Steven Guttenberg, Denholm Elliott, John Dehner, John Rubinstein, Michael Gough, Anne Meara, and Prunella Scales. Screenplay by Heywood Gould. —P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 21.)

Fantasia (1940)—Disney enlisted an odd assortment of collaborators (among them Stokowski, who did it voluntarily, and Stravinsky, who was brought in involuntarily), and this grab bag of ambitious animated shorts—an attempt to combine high art and mass culture—was publicized as if it were an artistic landmark. Disney's animators provided visual interpretations of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (in Stokowski's transcription, which is a precursor of the musical processing in "2001") and of hyped-up excerpts from the "Nutcracker" Suite, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," "The Rite of Spring," the "Pastoral Symphony," "The Dance of the Hours," and "A Night on Bald Mountain" (which somehow leads into the "Ave Maria"). Volcanoes erupt and dinosaurs battle during "The Rite of Spring," garlanded girl centaurs cavort during Beethoven's "Pastoral." Initially, the film was a box-office failure, but it proved successful in revivals, especially in the early seventies, when it became a popular head film, because of such ingredients as the abstract first section, the mushroom dance during the "Nutcracker" (one of the liveliest sequences), and the overly bright—somewhat psychedelic—color. "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," featuring Mickey Mouse, and parts of other sequences are first-rate Disney, but the total effect is grotesquely kitschy. —P.K. (Guild; through Nov. 15. . . . ¶ Gramercy, and Sutton; through Nov. 20.)

Ghost—It sounds like a horror movie, but it's a romantic fairy tale. The scariest thing about it is its shamelessness. A young New York bank executive, Sam (Patrick Swayze), is killed, on the street, at a moment in his life when everything seems to be going his way. After his death, Sam sticks around, as a spirit (and Swayze stays onscreen, as a body). He attends his funeral; watches his beautiful girlfriend, Molly (Demi Moore), drift grief-stricken through the spectacular loft they had just moved into; and then devotes himself to protecting her from the people who killed him. Through a reluctant psychic (Whoopi Goldberg), he tries to communicate with Molly; later, an experienced ghost (Vincent Schiavelli) teaches him how to move objects and break stuff. In this movie, death is treated as if it were merely a form of disability, one of those handicaps we've seen people struggle bravely with in TV movies—something for the individual to triumph over, with will power, hard work, and love. This creamy-toned fantasy, directed by Jerry Zucker from a screenplay by Bruce Joel Rubin, certainly pushes the audience's emotional buttons. It's a twentysomething hybrid of "It's a Wonderful Life" and some of the goofier, more solemn episodes of "The Twilight Zone," and there's not a trace of wit or irony in it. Its images of death have a soothing banality, like a greeting-card message from the world beyond. Also with Tony Goldwyn and Rick Aviles.—T.R. (7/30/90) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Manhattan Twin, and Embassy.)

GoodFellas—The director, Martin Scorsese, gives you a lift. He loves the Brooklyn organized-crime milieu, because it's where distortion, hyperbole, and exuberance all commingle. The movie is about being cock of the walk, with banners flying and crowds cheering. Based on Nicholas Pileggi's nonfiction book "Wiseguy," it's a triumphant piece of filmmaking—journalism and sociology presented with the brio of drama. But the three major hoods, played by Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro, and Joe Pesci, don't have a strong enough presence, and the movie lacks the juice and richness that come with major performances. (It's like the Howard Hawks "Scarface" without Scarface.) What you respond to is Scorsese's bravura: the filmmaking process becomes the subject of the movie. Watching it is like getting strung out on pure sensation. Paul Sorvino as Paulie and Lorraine Bracco as Karen both come through, and other performers in minor roles give the movie a frenzied, funny texture. The screenplay is by Pileggi and Scorsese; the cinematography is by Michael Ballhaus; the editing is by Thelma Schoonmaker. —P.K. *(9/24/90)* (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 86th Street East Twin, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Loews 19th Street East 6, Cinema I, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex; through Nov. 20.)

Henry & June—Philip Kaufman's wonderful new film shows us the writers Henry Miller (Fred Ward) and Anaïs Nin (Maria de Medeiros) in the first year of their acquaintance, the period of their brief, intense love affair. It's the love story of two people who are making themselves, and each other, up as they go along: Miller and Nin are at once real people and the products of their own imaginations—collaborators in a matched pair of literary myths. And the action unfolds in and around a city that seems both itself and a figment of itself: the Paris of the thirties. Kaufman brings out the bizarre, almost monstrous comedy of this odd literary/sexual love affair; he presents it as a kind of parody image of relationships between men and women. The third major character, Miller's wife, June (Uma Thurman), is the most mysterious presence here. She seems to represent a demonic, annihilating sexual force, but by the end she's almost a tragic figure. The actors are splendid: Kaufman gets miraculously intelligent performances from Ward and de Medeiros, and Thurman—uninhibited yet also weirdly delicate—gives the picture a jolt every time she appears. The movie creates a world, and Kaufman is both affectionate toward and clear-eyed about the people who live in it: he's concerned more with *enjoying* his characters, in all their contradictions, than with explaining them. The material plays as rich, dark erotic farce—a comedy about the duplicity of writers. Also with Richard E. Grant (as Nin's husband) and Kevin Spacey. The screenplay, by Kaufman and his wife, Rose, is based on Nin's diary. Superb cinematography by Philippe Rousselot.—T.R. (10/8/90) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Baronet, U. A. East, and Metro Cinema; through Nov. 15.)

Irene (1940)—This pre-camp version of the musical comedy (by James H. Montgomery, with music and lyrics by Harry Tierney and Joseph McCarthy) tries to be innocuously charming, and the effort is all too evident. The English director Herbert Wilcox and his star, Anna Neagle (who later became his wife), made a series of costume pictures ("Peg of Old Drury," "Victoria the Great," "Nurse Edith Cavell," etc.), and a series of musicals ("Irene"; "Sunny"; "No, No, Nanette") based on sweet, safe, dated shows. This one surrounded its star with Ray Milland, Roland Young, May Robson, Arthur Treacher, Billie Burke, and Alan Marshal,

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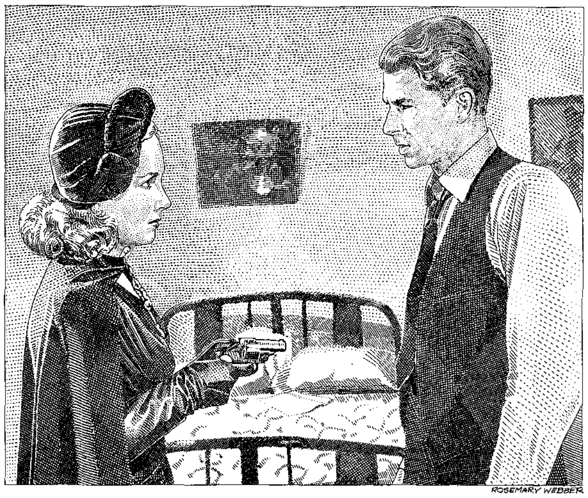
and it was the biggest hit R.K.O. had that year, but it dismally lacks vivacity, and when Anna Neagle sings "Sweet Little Alice Blue Gown" she is not the pretty young comedienne of one's musical-comedy dreams. The screenplay is by Alice Duer Miller.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Nov. 18-19.)

Lola (1961)—This first film by Jacques Demy is like an adolescent's dream of romance, formed from old movies. Lola (Anouk Aimée) is simple and open, an untalented and not too bright cabaret dancer, a vulnerable, sentimental girl. The film gives us life rose-tinted—a lovely, quirky mixture of French-movie worldliness circa 1939 and the innocent cheerfulness of the Gene Kelly–Frank Sinatra M-G-M musicals of the forties ("Anchors Aweigh," "On the Town"), with their generous, shy sailors, kind to kids and looking for love. Demy gently mocks romantic movie effects, which he employs more romantically than ever. Characters suddenly get rich or are stranded on an island, and Lola's dreams come true—and not just her dreams but her illusions. This is a poetic world in which illusions are vindicated. Lola, abandoned by her sailor lover, brings up their son in the best sentimental, good-hearted-bad-girl movie tradition, believing all the time that her man will return, and, because she sustains her faith in this illusion, he does return, fabulously rich and still in love with her, and they drive off into a bright future as the other cabaret girls weep in unison at the soul-satisfying beauty of it all. Lola, in top hat and boa for her nightclub act, is herself a quotation—an homage to Dietrich's Lola Lola of "The Blue Angel," but only to the effervescent and harmless half. Cinematography by Raoul Coutard; score by Michel Legrand. In French.—P.K. (Public Theatre; starting Nov. 20.)

Marathon Man (1976)—William Goldman's book—a visceral thriller about a Nazi ring of thieves in New York—seemed a lead-pipe cinch to make audiences almost sick with excitement (the way "The French Connection" did); it's "Death Wish" with a lone Jewish student (played by Dustin Hoffman) getting his own back from the Nazis. But the director, John Schlesinger, opts for so much frazzled crosscutting that there isn't the clarity needed for suspense. The only emotion one is likely to feel is revulsion at the brutality and general unpleasantness. With Laurence Olivier, Roy Scheider, Marthe Keller, William Devane, and Fritz Weaver; cinematography by Conrad Hall.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 21.)

Miller's Crossing—A cold, clever period gangster movie by the Coen brothers. (Ethan produces and Joel directs, from a script they've written together.) Essentially, it's an academic exercise, a pastiche of the intricately plotted, morally ambiguous crime fiction of Dashiell Hammett: the screenplay incorporates large chunks of "Red Harvest" and "The Glass Key," with a notion or two from "The Maltese Falcon" thrown in. The Coens have certainly done their homework: their movie is a brilliant reading of Hammett. But that's all it is. The picture seems to have no life of its own, and the Coens' formal control and meticulously crafted ironies become, after a while, rather depressing. This is not so much a gangster movie as an extended, elaborate allusion to one. With Gabriel Byrne, Marcia Gay Harden, John Turturro, Jon Polito, J. E. Freeman, and Albert Finney (who is, by a long shot, the most entertaining performer in the movie).—T.R. (Coronet, Chelsea Cinemas, and Carnegie Screening Room. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex; through Nov. 15.)

Pacific Heights—It's supposed to be a thriller, but it's more like an executive decision to make a thriller. The director, John Schlesinger, has his professionalism—it shows in the clean, efficient staging. But the fun is missing; he scares you only by making you nervous. Melanie Griffith and Matthew Modine are the San Francisco lovers who fix up a Victorian house (on Potréro Hill); Michael Keaton is the sicko scam artist who takes over one of their two rental units and calls the police when they try to evict him. It's a drag that we're expected to identify with the dull young couple; the tenant with the perverted legalistic mind and the fiendish cupid's-bow smile provides the only gleams of interest. A promising cast—it includes the uncredited Beverly D'Angelo, and Laurie Metcalf, Dorian Harewood, Carl Lumbly, Mako, Tracey Walter, Dan Hedaya, Luca Bercovici, Buy Boyd, and Tippi Hedren as rich Florence—is all but thrown away. The screenplay is by Daniel Pyne.—P.K. (10/22/90) (Chelsea Cinemas. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Gotham Cinema; through Nov. 20.)



At the Biograph, Lya Lys and Ronald Reagan in "Murder in the Air"

Postcards from the Edge—This tale of a sorrowful, wisecracking starlet (Meryl Streep) whose brassy, boozing former-star mother (Shirley MacLaine) started her on sleeping pills when she was nine is camp without the zest of camp. It's camp played borderline straight—a druggy-Cinderella movie about an unformed girl who has to go past despair to find herself. The director, Mike Nichols, is a parodist who feigns sincerity, and his tone keeps slipping around. What's clear is that we're meant to be enthralled by the daughter's radiant face, her refinement, her honesty. Nichols keeps the camera on Streep as if to prove that he can make her a popular big star—a new Crawford or Bette Davis. (She remains distant, emotionally atonal.) The tacky, bright-colored film—a near-plotless version of a woman's picture—is weightless, yet it's watchable. Its jadedness appeals to the narcissism of show-biz insiders and to the would-be insider in the rest of us. (Nichols is acclaimed for being hip to the Zeitgeist.)—P.K. (10/22/90) (Chelsea Cinemas, and Cinema 3. . . . ¶ Regency; through Nov. 20.)

Reversal of Fortune—With Glenn Close, Jeremy Irons, and Ron Silver; directed by Barbet Schroeder. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Loews 19th Street East 6, 68th Street Playhouse, 8th St. Playhouse, 57th St. Playhouse, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

The Right Stuff (1983)—Based on Tom Wolfe's 1979 book, this often satirical epic—a reënactment of the early years of the space program (1947–63)—gives off a pleasurable hum. The writer-director Philip Kaufman is working on a broad canvas and it excites him—it tickles him. The movie has the happy, enthusiastic spirit of a fanfare, and it's astonishingly entertaining considering how divided it is in spirit. It contrasts Chuck Yeager (Sam Shepard) and the other early test pilots who risk their lives in secrecy with the seven publicly acclaimed astronauts who replace the chimps that were sent up in the first American space capsules. The movie is more than a little skewed: it's Kaufman's—and Tom Wolfe's—dreamy vision of the nonchalant Yeager (and a past that never was) set against a comic view of the modern, hype-bound world. Then, it turns out, the astronauts are not quite the square-jawed mannequins they pretend to be; they're phony only on the outside. But whatever one's reservations, the film is great fun to watch. With Dennis Quaid, who has a devilish kid's smile, with his upper lip a straight line across his face, as Gordon Cooper; the pale-eyed Ed Harris as John Glenn; Fred Ward as Gus Grissom; and Scott Glenn, Pamela Reed, Veronica Cartwright, Mary Jo Deschanel (as Annie Glenn), Jeff Goldblum, Barbara Hershey, Levon Helm, Scott Wilson, Kim Stanley, Jane Dornacker, and many others, including Brigadier General Chuck Yeager as a bartender, Donald Moffat as Lyndon Johnson, and Robert Beer, who's an uncanny look-alike, as Eisenhower. (There are some pretty awful scenes featuring Royal Dano as a black-clad minister.)—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 17.)

They Shoot Horses, Don't They? (1969)—Horace McCoy's hardboiled nineteen-thirties novel about the Hollywood extras who enter a marathon dance contest is turned into a macabre allegory, with the paranoid, apocalyptic vision of American rottenness that was typical of movies in the Vietnam era. Though the picture staggers under its heavy load [illegible] symbolism and is marred by flash-forwards, and even flashbacks triggered by flash-forwards, it's still striking, with vestiges of the hard sarcasm of thirties lower-depths humor—those acrid sick jokes that make one wince and laugh simultaneously. As the defiantly self-destructive, sharp-tongued Gloria, the girl who is so afraid of being gullible that she can't live, Jane Fonda gives a startling, strong performance. She shows the true star's gift of drawing one to her emotionally even when the character she plays is repellent; her Gloria, like Bogart's Fred C. Dobbs, is one of those creations who live on as part of our shared moviegoing experience. The screenwriters, James Poe and Robert E. Thompson, wrote a good role for Gig Young as the promoter-m.c.; he's a crude barker who, in his pitches on the microphone, cheapens every human emotion, but he's also sensitive and empathic. He knows how to handle people in crises—partly, one gathers, because he has been among people in ugly messes all his seamy life. The director, Sydney Pollack, isn't particularly inventive, but he has tight control of the actors. They work well for him, and he keeps the grisly central situation going with energy and drive. The cast includes Michael Sarrazin (his role—that of a man who commits a murder from which he is totally estranged—is the adaptors' worst failure, and he just looks weak, calf-eyed, and vaguely benumbed), and Susannah York, Bonnie Bedelia, Bruce Dern, Red Buttons, Allyn Ann McLerie, and Severn Darden.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 16.)

To Sleep with Anger—A domestic comedy with an unusually dense texture. It's shot straightforwardly, in a style that appears realistic almost to the point of banality, and yet right from the start there's something unsettling about its plainness: Charles Burnett, who wrote and directed, keeps hinting that things are not necessarily what they seem. Gideon (Paul Butler) and Suzie (Mary Alice) are a middle-aged black couple who live in Los Angeles; their roots, however, are in the rural South, and they've retained quite a few of the customs, values, and superstitions of the culture they were brought up in. The story gets going when a friend of theirs from back home appears on their doorstep; they invite him to stay with them a while, and he does. This unexpected guest, Harry (Danny Glover), turns out to be a gifted confidence man, with a sharp eye for human weakness: he's a grinning, honey-tongued demon. He uses his backcountry wisdom with sinister, obscure intent, for purposes that Burnett, cunningly, allows to remain ambiguous. The presen[illegible] of Harry gives the realistic surface of the movie a vibrant strangeness: he seems to transform everything that happens in these clean, comfortable living rooms and kitchens into dark rituals performed in the woods in the dead of night. The picture has a risky, complex tone: it's a comedy, because the family's threatened world is set right in the end, but there are moments along the way when the intimations of unseen controlling forces—both in Glover's elegantly suggestive performance and in the eerie, calm precision of Burnett's direction—give us the creeps. Also with Richard Brooks and Carl Lumbly. There's a brief appearance by the blues singer Jimmy Witherspoon, who performs a mournful, robust version of "C. C. Rider."—T.R. (11/5/90) (Angelika Film Center.)

Vincent & Theo—With Tim Roth and Paul Rhys, directed by Robert Altman. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Loews Fine Arts.)

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THE
NEW YORKER

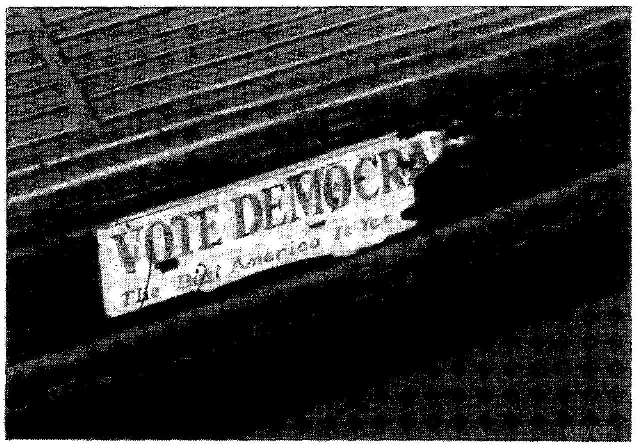
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

A YEAR after the Berlin Wall was breached and the "post-Cold War era" proclaimed, Americans face the prospect of a "hot war" fought against an enemy that a few months ago they didn't know they had. But instead of addressing such fundamental questions as what America's real objectives in Kuwait are, and whether achieving them is worth the sacrifice of American lives, our leaders have given us a great deal of loud talk, leaving us to speculate about whether the dispatch of two hundred thousand more troops is a sign that war is inevitable or whether it's simply a means of tightening the screws while putting off the moment of decision. The spasms of belligerence that have punctuated American policy have thus far not only failed to intimidate Saddam Hussein into relinquishing Kuwait but forced American citizens to share the predicament of the Iraqi leader: like him, they must constantly wonder, while listening to the bellicose words of the President, if this nation really means to act on them. And by cloaking his policies in rhetoric, Mr. Bush has avoided having to offer a convincing reason for Americans to undertake a war in Kuwait. The demonstrators who chanted "No blood for oil!" he angrily retorted, "Some people never get the word. The fight isn't about oil. The fight is about *naked aggression* that will not stand"—as if Americans had ever agreed that whenever one nation attacks another, anywhere in the world, we should stand ready to fight and die.

Our policy in the Gulf—purportedly based on the theory that only if Hussein is convinced war is imminent can war be prevented—is in fact moving us toward war, while inhibiting any meaningful discussion of where this country's vital interests really lie, and why. Mr. Bush's sweeping, undiscriminating claims carry on a long tradition of extravagant American statements that mask underlying disparities between the nation's aspirations and its power. The most important of those statements, perhaps, was the Truman Doctrine, which forty-three years ago helped provide the rationale for the Cold War. Then, too, America stood on the threshold of a new era, struggling to understand a world order that had been abruptly transformed, while in the distance armed aggression seemed to imperil the hard-won peace. The Soviet Union was tightening its grip on Eastern Europe and putting pressure on Turkey, and a Communist insurgency threatened the government of Greece. American officials felt that the United States had to respond. But how was intervention to be justified to the American people? The Truman Administration devised a policy that obligated the United States to come to the aid of all "free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures"—a rhetorical inflation that owed more to salesmanship than to statesmanship, and was designed to make the actual interests involved, in the words of Secretary of State Dean Acheson, "clearer than truth" to the American people.

In the hands of Acheson's successor, John Foster Dulles, the Truman Doctrine led to the establishment of a worldwide system of alliances and treaties, and to American commitments wholly out of scale with American interests. The United States had consecrated itself to "a global ideological struggle against revolutionary communism"—in the words of Walter Lippmann, one of the doctrine's most influential critics—and by doing so had crippled its ability to make clear-eyed judgments: it had obligated itself to defend its own "credibility" whenever and wherever it saw its vow challenged. Lippmann later pointed out that this global commitment was "at the root of our difficulty in appraising coolly the extent and the importance of our engagement in Vietnam," and he added, "I think there is a stopping point between globalism and isolationism. The test of statesmanship is to find those stopping points and act accordingly."



Our policy in the Persian Gulf offers little evidence that American officials are making any effort to find such a "stopping point." Real interests are unquestionably involved—they have to do with oil and with supporting a number of

American clients that supply it—but the talk of "naked aggression" has overshadowed them. Within days of Iraq's invasion, the President recklessly committed the United States to forcing its full reversal, and he has since insisted that he will never compromise that goal. The invasion of Kuwait "will not stand," he says again and again: America will not "yield one inch" on its demand that Iraq unconditionally withdraw from Kuwait. Yet it has been clear almost from the outset that these statements, if they are rigidly adhered to, mean either complete surrender on Hussein's part (an unlikely scenario) or war—and perhaps a ground war of the bloodiest kind.

If the real interests of the country are weighed, Lippmann's "stopping point" must be found somewhere short of war. No doubt it is in the American interest to defend Saudi Arabia, a source of a large percentage of the world's oil, but American troops have already succeeded in doing that, and the defense could be maintained with only a fraction of the troops that are now in Saudi Arabia. It is in the American interest to prevent Iraq from obtaining a nuclear weapon, but the way to do that is, just as it was before August 2nd, to keep the necessary components—which are produced and exported almost entirely by our allies—from reaching Iraq. And it is certainly in the interest of all nations, including the United States, to uphold the principle that aggression should not be rewarded—that large nations should not be allowed to swallow smaller ones. But that principle is already being upheld—by the United Nations, the proper instrument; and through international sanctions, the appropriate weapon.

Though the sanctions may never force Saddam Hussein to give back every inch of Kuwaiti territory, in time they could well force him to negotiate the withdrawal of Iraqi soldiers from all but the two islands and the bit of border territory which were at the root of the original dispute. No one would claim this to be an ideal solution, but the sad fact is that the only policy capable of insuring a free, territorially whole Kuwait, while keeping American losses to an acceptable level, is a policy that would have prevented the invasion in the first place.

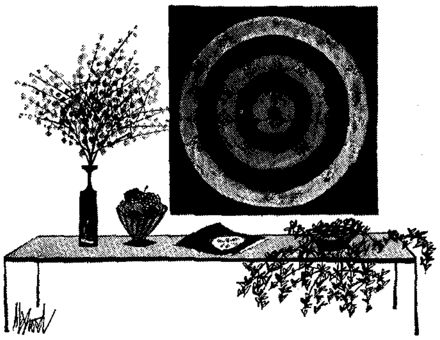
Arguing that America has little choice but to go to war, Henry Kissinger recently remarked, "Once the troops are there, their presence creates its own reality." It is unfortunate that as the post-Cold War era begins, our policy is being driven by such a "reality." Lippman wrote, "I admire public men who play it cool and do not bend their judgment to the exhortations of the globalists. I am confident, moreover, that in the issues of war and peace, the safe course is to make a judgment as to where is the balance of our interests and our power, and having made that judgment, to act decisively." Perhaps President Bush, behind his angry bluster, has already made that judgment, but, if so, he hasn't disclosed it, and he has certainly not come anywhere near making his case to the country. If the post-Cold War world is to be any different from what preceded it, our "public men" must be unafraid to identify the limits of American power and to tell the people where those limits lie.

●

A FRIEND writes:

Did anyone else in town catch the rainbow? The one over Central Park? A few Sunday afternoons ago, about four-fifteen Eastern Standard Time?

I was hurrying north on Central Park West, trying to get home before it rained. I had just felt a few drops, and then I suddenly noticed that the *sun was shining*. Directly overhead, dark, shaggy clouds were being herded east by a strong breeze; the rain they had brought was still falling. But to the west, along the Hudson River, the late-afternoon sun had found or burned a large hole in the clouds, and a dazzling yellow light was streaming through; across the Park, the row of west-facing apartment towers on Fifth Avenue was plated in borrowed glory.



I didn't see the rainbow take shape, so I can't tell you whether it was suddenly there in the sky—complete, perfect—or emerged, piece by improbable piece, like a Cheshire cat's upside-down smile. What makes rainbows so difficult to describe is their unvarying resemblance to children's drawings or cartoons of rainbows—always the same watermelon-rind curve with the same bands of color arranged in the same electromagnetic parfait. The only thing exceptional about this rainbow was its location. One end appeared to rise out of the Upper West Side (if I had to be precise, I would have said somewhere around 116th Street and Broadway), while the other end fell to earth somewhere behind Fifth Avenue on the Upper East Side.

I had always thought of rainbows as rural phenomena, like tornadoes; the sight of a natural phenomenon of such benign perfection poised right above the heart of Manhattan was both thrilling and unnerving. The city is often so close to hallucinogenic that New Yorkers are habitually driven to test their perceptions against those of their neighbors. The corner I stood on—Ninety-second Street and Central Park West—was empty except for a jogger in dark-blue sweats who had come loping down the side street and was waiting impatiently for the light to change. As her pink-and-gray Nikes drummed on the sidewalk, I blurted out, "Look up!" If she had turned her head at that instant, she would have seen my right index finger jabbing at the sky, but she didn't acknowledge my existence. The moment the light turned green, she sprang off the curb, obviously relieved to leave me behind. I had no quarrel with her fidelity to the rules of modern city life: don't let down your guard, for strangers on the street are guilty until proved innocent; don't make eye contact, because you never know until it's too late which ones are dangerous and which are only crazy.

I must have spoken louder than I intended, because a man standing under an awning on Central Park West called out to me, "You see it?"

I nodded, suddenly cautious myself. The Adidas on his feet had no laces, and a large black trash bag slung over his right shoulder clicked and chuckled as he shifted the weight of salvaged bottles and cans inside. "Ever see something like that before?" he said.

"Not around here," I ventured.

"Me, neither." He glanced up, as if to make sure it was still there. The bands of color appeared more vivid just above the buildings that lined Central Park West—the rainbow seemed to be drawing energy from the city it graced.

The man shifted his bag noisily to his left shoulder. "Ain't it supposed to *mean* something?" he asked, but not like a man who expected an answer.

By the time I reached Ninety-fifth Street, the rainbow had faded, melted away without a trace. When I got home, my wife was downstairs doing the laundry; she had missed it. I called a few friends; none of them had seen it, either.

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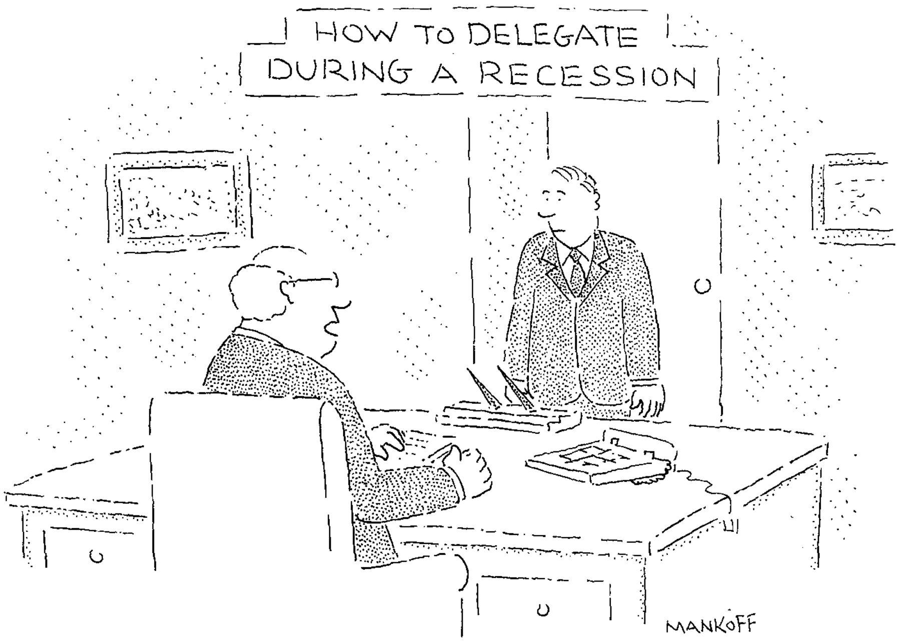

HOW TO DELEGATE DURING A RECESSION
MANKOFF

"You're fired. Pass it on."

• •

Triple A Double S

THE initials of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies have always presented a problem, so most members in the know call it the Triple A Double S. However, Adam B. Ulam, the director of Harvard's Russian Research Center, likes to say "Triple S" while flashing a disingenuous grin that's meant to make you wonder whether his Polish accent is perhaps thicker than you had supposed. Not long ago, we attended the annual convention of the A.A.A.S.S., in Washington, D.C., to see how experts on the Soviet Union and on Eastern Europe are bearing up under the strain of watching the disintegration of the system they have been studying for decades.

There we were, on the lower, or "concourse," level of the Washington Hilton on a bright afternoon, ambling into and out of windowless conference rooms with names like Caucus and Cabinet and Jefferson East and Jefferson West, and inhaling stale cigarette smoke. In the past decade, a lot of academics have quit smoking, but not many Slavists. Long research trips to the Soviet Union have helped produce an academic culture that recalls the Russian penchant for cigarettes, booze, and the wrong food. People who study the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have often tended to be a little on the self-destructive side and more than a little gloomy. They're catastrophizers, who have chosen to spend their professional lives studying a part of the world that specializes in misfortune. It's revealing that the "News of the Profession" department of the field's principal quarterly journal, *Slavic Review*, consists entirely of obituaries.

The year 1987 was a particularly uneasy one for people in Soviet studies. After an initial period of comfortable doubt whether Mikhail Gorbachev would effect anything more than cosmetic changes on the ailing body politic, *glasnost* really did begin to transform Soviet society and culture. But then ethnic strife in the Caucasus, followed by the major earthquake in Armenia in December of 1988, enabled most A.A.A.S.S. members to sound a more familiar melancholy note, and the note has gradually intensified as they have watched the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics dissolve and its economy fall apart.

The current crisis lent the convention a palpable serenity. As always at A.A.A.S.S. gatherings, a few people (all men) circulated among colleagues with the latest *anekdoty* from Moscow, mostly in question-and-answer form: "If Soviet Jews were completely free to leave the Soviet Union for the United States, how many would leave? Two hundred and eighty-five million," or "What is that mark on Gorbachev's forehead? The map of the Soviet Union after *perestroika*."

Our favorite funny man was Professor Richard Stites, of Georgetown University, whose "Revolutionary Dreams" had just been awarded the Vucinich Prize for the best 1989 book in Slavic studies. He is the middle-aged enfant terrible of the profession. "It's been a tough year," he told us, puffing on an unfiltered Camel. "I researched my new book on Soviet popular culture. Three months in Moscow, three in Leningrad. Night after night, I went to the theatre, to cabarets, music bars, movies. It was really tough." Some of Stites' other jokes reflected his Washington home base: "Did you know that Dan Quayle asked Gorbachev about the splotch on his forehead? Gorbachev replied that it was a birthmark. 'Oh, really?' Quayle said. 'And how long have you had it?' "

While a significant number of papers delivered at the convention were devoted to the Soviet Union's current predicament, there were also plenty on topics like "The Balkan Nature of Macedonian Stress Phenomena" (no, not *our* kind of stress—the linguistics kind), "The Soviet Communist Party and Evolution of the Recommendation for Agro-Industrial Coordinating Organs," and "Death Ritual Among Russian and Ukrainian Peasants:

Linkages Between the Living and the Dead."

In the corridors and the hotel eating places we heard mainly gossip and the warmly threatening greetings of reunited colleagues: "What ever happened to your book on nineteenth-century prostitutes?" and "So how did your last book *do*?" and "Are you still working on that same workers' project? How many years has it been now?" Hardly a word about Yeltsin or Popov or the five-hundred-day plan for the transition to a market economy. The Eastern Europeanists seemed more interested in talking about what has happened to the territories they study. The G.D.R. Studies Association, one of many A.A.A.S.S. affiliates, went as far as to meet to decide whether it should continue to exist.

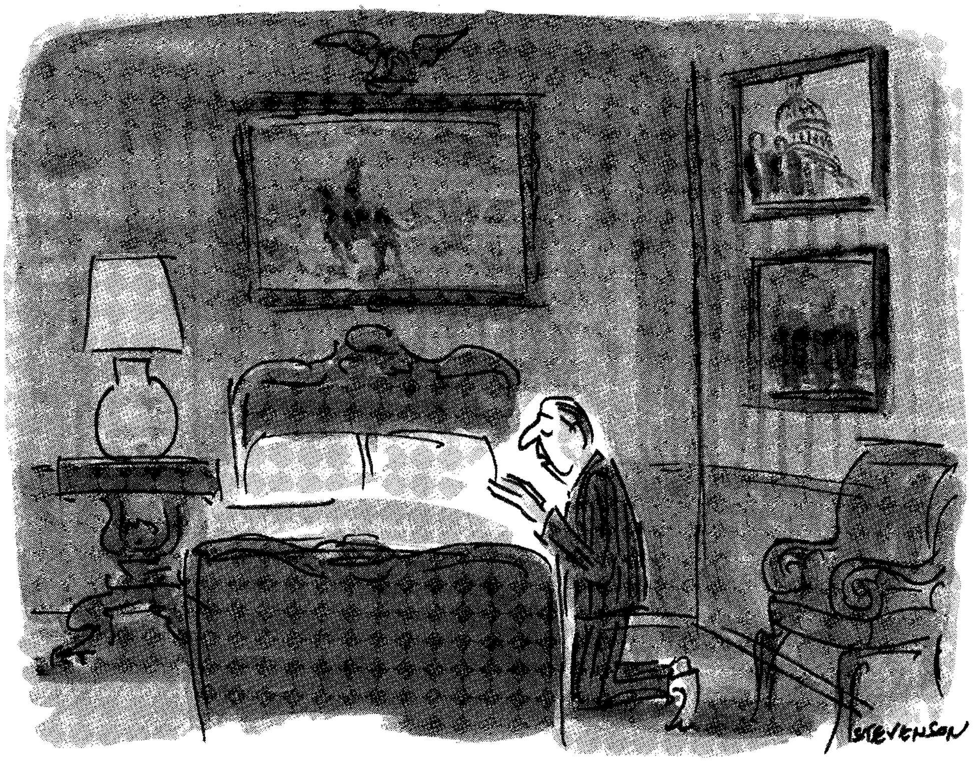
We wondered if Soviet specialists were embarrassed about not keeping up with new developments—something that is now more than a full-time job, we gathered, since it requires spending all day every day just reading the Soviet press. Or, almost six years into Gorbachev's rule, were they just enjoying a respite from having to hold forth on current events? Obviously, it was no longer good form to talk about one's recent trip to Moscow or Leningrad, with scholars now shuttling back and forth week after week.

We asked Professor Moshe Lewin, of the University of Pennsylvania, who was born and raised in Vilna, how the current Soviet crisis had affected him.

"I run away from it back to history, where I belong," he replied, in heavily accented English. "I will not appear on television, trying to do the journalist's job, despite the enormous pressure on all of us to leave early Soviet history, leave imperial Russia, leave medieval Muscovy, and fly into the present."

At the convention banquet, the speaker was the Honorable Jack F. Matlock, the United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union. The Ambassador, who was trained as a Russian-language scholar, declared that A.A.A.S.S. members ought to feel no discomfiture at not having predicted *perestroika*. After all, he said, it took everyone by surprise. Rather, he congratulated the field for having so accurately documented the totalitarian nature of the Soviet polity, which is now widely accepted in the Soviet Union. He also told the audience the following story, about a Russian friend who came to an Embassy lunch some time ago and breathlessly reported a conversation she had just had with her cabdriver. When she asked to be driven to the American Embassy, the driver had muttered, "Congratulations—you're getting out of here!" She had replied, "I'm not going to the American Embassy to get a visa—I'm going for lunch! Why is it you seem so bitter? Don't you love your motherland?" The driver said, "I do love her a little bit. Sort of like my wife. I love her a little bit. I'm a little bit afraid of her. And, you know, there are times when I'd just as soon have another one."

The audience's laughter quickly gave way to a prolonged female hiss. It occurred to us that the Triple A Double S might be in for some *perestroika* of its own.

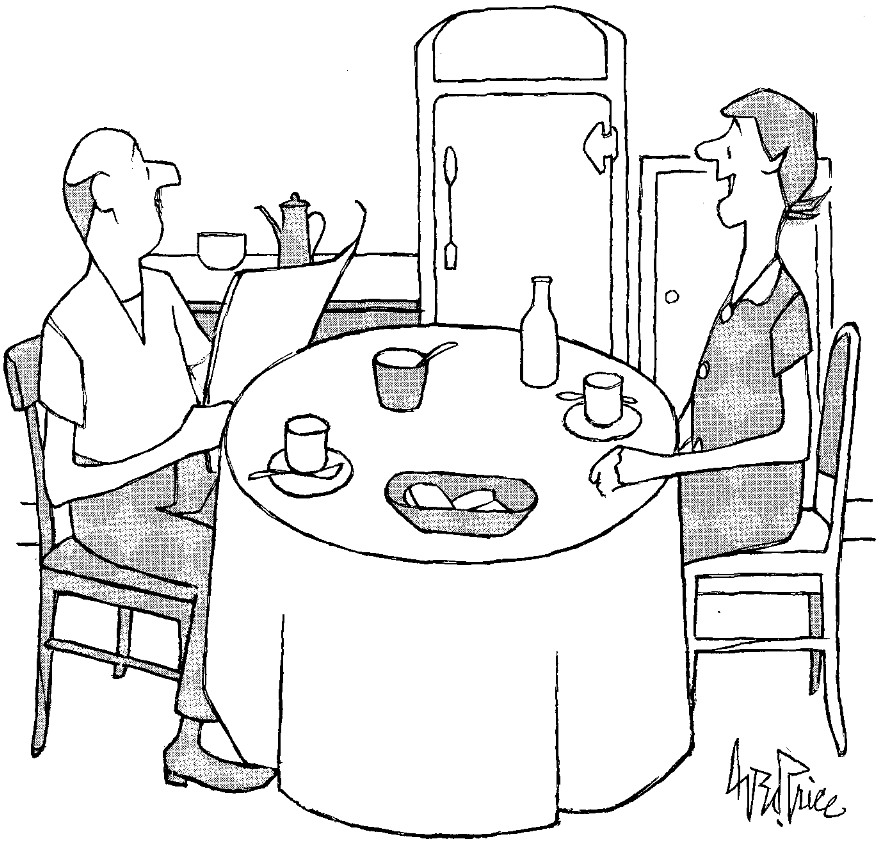


"Please don't let it become the Keating Six."

Shogi

ON a recent Monday evening, the members of the New York chapter of the Shogi Federation of Japan held the first of their three regularly scheduled monthly meetings in one of the tatami rooms at the back of the Iroha Restaurant, on West Forty-ninth Street. The Iroha is almost exactly five blocks north of the theatre where Karpov and Kasparov were playing *their* board game, and early in the evening a visitor who had dropped by the chess headquarters on his way to the Iroha was sketching out for the assembled shogi players some of the action in the heavily hyped championship down there. Shogi is an offshoot of chess, but over the centuries it has overlaid upon the rules of chess still more complexities of strategy, variety, and difficulty, and so the shogi players, as they readied their pieces on three eighty-one-square boards that were set out on a restaurant table, heard out the visitor's recital with the steady, amused patience of grownups having to listen to a seven-year-old recounting the intricacies of a really tough game of "Careers."

When the visitor concluded by describing Kasparov's daring, swooping victory in the second game of the championship (as it turned out, one of the few decisive moments the chess championship has so far provided), Mr. Muneyuki Ishikawa, the most highly rated shogi player in New York, said, "Ah. So it did not end in a draw?" The other members of the chapter chuckled deeply. Shogi players share a persuasive conviction that chess players are always eager to settle for a tie. Shogi almost

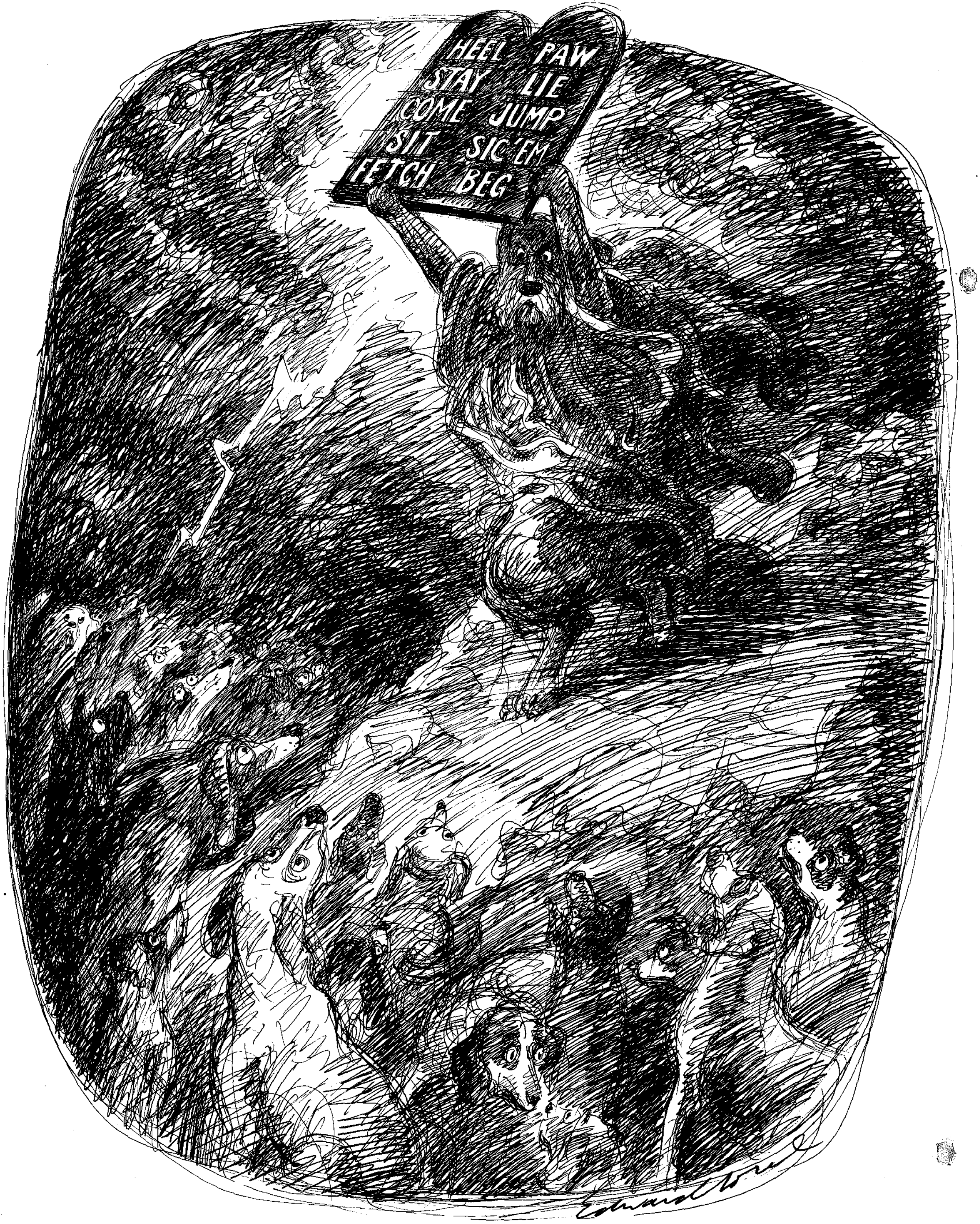


"For your birthday this year I thought we'd have a piñata."

never ends in a draw. "It would be interesting to see what might happen if Mr. Kasparov or Mr. Karpov met one of the Big Three," Mr. Ishikawa went on, and he explained to the visitor that the Big Three are the three best shogi players in Japan: in descending order of age—an important point, he noted, since each is seen to be exemplary of his generation—Makoto Nakahara, Koji Tanigawa, and Yoshiharu Habu. Nakahara and Tanigawa recently played for the Meijin title, the highest title in shogi, and Nakahara won. Habu, who is only nineteen, is widely considered certain to be a champion in the next few years. "In the past, it was believed that excellence in shogi was a consequence of experience," Mr. Ishikawa said. "Habu demonstrates that this is not so. He is the shogi champion for the New Wave generation—the age of information. Yasuharu Ohyama is the godfather of shogi; he is sixty-seven years old. Unfortunately, he was defeated three times this summer. Perhaps retirement is a good idea." He returned to the subject of a hybrid shogi-chess match. "One international chess master is actually a member of the Shogi Federation," he said. "Mr. Kaufman. Mr. Larry Kaufman. He was invited to join, and to play in Japan this summer. I believe he is the first American to receive an invitation of this kind. Unfortunately, Mr. Kaufman was eliminated in the first round." He began to set up his pieces in preparation for facing a New York attorney named Shigetaka Ogihara.

A shogi board ready for play is arrayed with wedge-shaped wooden pieces of slightly varying sizes; the value of a piece is indicated not by its shape, as in the Western game, but by characters inscribed upon its face. Shogi pieces are set up like chess pieces except that between the pawns and the other pieces there is an intermediate row, occupied by two pieces that have no direct equivalents in chess. Like chess, shogi begins with simple, set moves, and as Mr. Ishikawa eased through a series of these he explained something of the history and lore of the game. "Shogi began in medieval times, when a form of chess was imported into Japan," he said. "Sometime in the next few centuries, it became very different from chess. The big difference is the drops. In shogi, no piece is ever out of the game. If you capture a piece, you hold on to it, and then you can recycle it into the game on your side. Chess is about killing—war. Shogi is about changing sides—government." He surveyed the position that Mr. Ogihara had created, and said, "Ah, this is a form of castling. It is a very familiar pattern. In shogi, however, there are no rules of castling—pattern evolves. Strategy is much less structured than in chess. More fluid. In chess, two players can revolve through a series of set patterns—this opening, that defense, that endgame. In shogi, you have to find your way—grope, grope, grope—and then, suddenly, there you are, in a familiar place."

To an eye untutored in the subtleties of either game, shogi is the far more eventful one to watch. Long periods of concentration are broken by sudden flurries of movement, as three or four pieces are exchanged in a couple of seconds, and previously captured pieces are suddenly dropped back onto the board, like parachutists behind enemy lines. The game suggests a siege infected with treachery: each player constructs a defensive perimeter around his king, and then his opponent grabs and "turns" a piece here and a piece there, trying to break through. The decorum of shogi is very different from the decorum of chess. Where Karpov and Kasparov try to maintain an air of implacable serenity, shogi players like to act out: it is appropriate to hiss with pain when your opponent takes a piece, to raise your eyebrows in feigned surprise when he introduces an old piece of yours on his side, and to cast constant sidelong glances at your opponent's waiting arsenal of treacherous pieces. Certain cultural constants are shared, however. Even without looking at the board, you can always tell which shogi player has the strategic advantage, simply by noticing which player looks bored and which one is furrowing his brow and drawing tentative circles in the air. Also, winning shogi players tend to share with their chess-playing counterparts the unhappy habit of re-creating immediately after your capitulation the position in which they sealed their victory, and helping you see all the ways



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you might have dodged the bullet.

For a shogi player at this moment, nearly all talk is comparative talk. "Shogi is a popular sport," Mr. Ogihara said after the game. (He lost.) "It is a game of imagination, not recall. Chess is one-dimensional—forward to victory, forward to victory. In this sense, it is a very Western game."

Mr. Ishikawa smiled. "No," he said. "Chess *seems* to be a game of victory, all or nothing. But what is it really? A *draw* game. Armies meet, they threaten, they shake their weapons, they prepare to attack. And then what happens, most of the time? Draw, draw, draw. In *this* sense, it is a very Western game."

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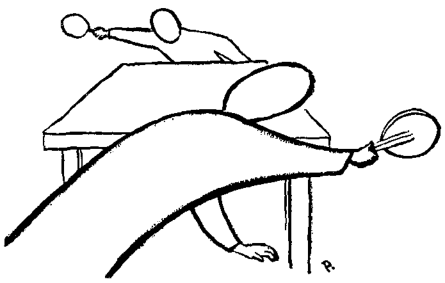

I'd like to illustrate with an actual recorded conversation that Ashley Danagher, of Goleta, California, had with us after receiving our trial mailing. Ashley has graciously permitted us to reproduce this transcript:

TARONIA OPERATOR: Hello, this is Taronia Operator No. 45. How may I help you?

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A.D.: Mmmmmmm . . .

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A.D.: Ohyesyesyesyesyes!

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Or come visit us in Taronia, now our flagship outlet. —POLLY FROST

THE END OF VANDALISM

ONE fall they held the blood drive in the fire barn at Grafton. Sheriff Dan Norman was there mainly as a gesture of good will, but one of the nurses didn't make it, so Dan agreed to place the gauze in the crook of everyone's arm. "And I thank you," he would say.

It was early afternoon when Louise Darling came in. Dan knew her somewhat. Tiny Darling was along, too—her husband. Dan thought Tiny had done some break-ins at Westey's Farm Home on Highway 18. There was no real proof.

Louise had a red scarf over her hair. She removed her C.P.O. coat so they could draw her blood. She wore a dark green T-shirt with a pocket. Dan admired her long white wrists and pressed the square of gauze to her pulse.

"I thank you, Mrs. Darling," he said.

Then came Tiny. He had red hair and had a tattoo of an owl on the back of his hand. "You ought to be sending this blood to Port Gaspar," he said.

"And where would that be?" said Dan.

"Port Gaspar," Tiny repeated. "The Navy sold the Eskimos a load of frozen salmon that turned out to be poisoned. Now they're sick. They've got blood poisoning. So guess what the Navy does. Of course, they send in some lawyers to threaten the Eskimo community."

"Where is Port Gaspar?" said Dan.

"In the South Pole," said Louise. She had large green eyes and faded freckles. "We heard the report on the radio. It might not have been the Navy, but they came on Navy boats."

"As observers," said Tiny. "They rode on the decks in their own little section, cordoned off with cords. Now many of the Eskimos need to have their blood flushed out."

Sheriff Dan Norman released Tiny's arm and spoke to Nurse Barbara Jones. "Where does this blood go, anyway? All to Mercy?"

"That's right," she said, "but I'll tell you what. One time my second cousin got blood-poisoned. You can't mess with it. Dan, you know her—my cousin Mary."

"Mary Ross," said Dan.

"Mary Jewell," said the nurse. "Now, her mother was a Ross—Viola Ross. She was first cousins with Kenny Ross who went to Korea. She couldn't even walk across the room."

Louise Darling straightened her coat and tilted her head to the side. "I'm not sure if these were actual Eskimos," she said.

"I notice you've started accumulating miles on different airlines from me."

"It was cold enough to be Eskimos," said Tiny. "Those lawyers said, 'Any more complaints, we're taking down this whole town with a snowplow.' "

"Their houses were made of snow," said Dan.

"Evidently," said Tiny.

THE next time Dan Norman ran into Tiny Darling was in a fight that happened one Sunday night at the Lime Bucket tavern. Dan had especially disliked bar fights ever since the time he got stabbed in the back with a pool cue and ended up going to a chiropractor instead of being outdoors all that summer. Dan did not know much about what a chiropractor did, and from what he could tell neither did this chiropractor, who kept a bottle of vodka on a big safe behind his desk and insisted on being called Dr. Young Jim because his deceased father, he said, had been known as Dr. Old Jim. This time the fight was being won by Tiny. He had Bob Becker by the hood of a red sweatshirt and kept knocking his head against the handles of a foosball machine.

When Dan and Tiny came out, the first snow of the year had begun and they could see it falling at a slant all up and down the empty street. Tiny was alert but quite drunk. From what Dan had been able to find out, the fight had been over whether Tanya Tucker was washed up in her career, with Tiny taking the position that she was not.

Dan headed up the highway toward the lockup at Morrisville. About halfway there Tiny took a swing at him, and Dan had to pull over, get Tiny out, put the handcuffs on him, and stuff him in the back of the cruiser.

"I always thought you were smart," said Dan, through the cage. "Come to find out I'm sadly mistaken."

"My arms are going out of their sockets," said Tiny.

"Just as well be smacking your own head on the handles," said Dan.

A long silence followed. "You have snow on your hat," said Tiny.

Dan slowed for a raccoon groping its way across the road. "We know it was you that broke in at Westey's," said Dan. "Pretty clumsy on that door, by the way. But it's beside the fact, since we're not going to prosecute, so I don't really know why I bring it up."

Tiny laughed. "How tall is this cruiser?" he said. "A foot and a half?"

The lights were low at the jail in Morrisville, and inside they were projecting slides of nudes onto a map of the county. "I wish I lived at Floyd Coffee's farm tonight," said Deputy Earl Kellogg, Jr. Dan told them to cut it out and take Tiny Darling and put him in a cell. Then he sat down to do the paperwork.

"Dopers are out there pushing dope," said Tiny. "People stabbing that guy in the alley behind the bank. On the other hand is me, who gave blood."

"Woe is Tiny," said Earl Kellogg.

"Boo hoo," said Ed Aiken.

"What's your real name, Tiny?" said Dan.

"Charles," said Tiny. "I'm in the plumbing supply."

"What a lie," said Earl Kellogg. "Dan, Ted Jewell's daughter called. I forget her name."

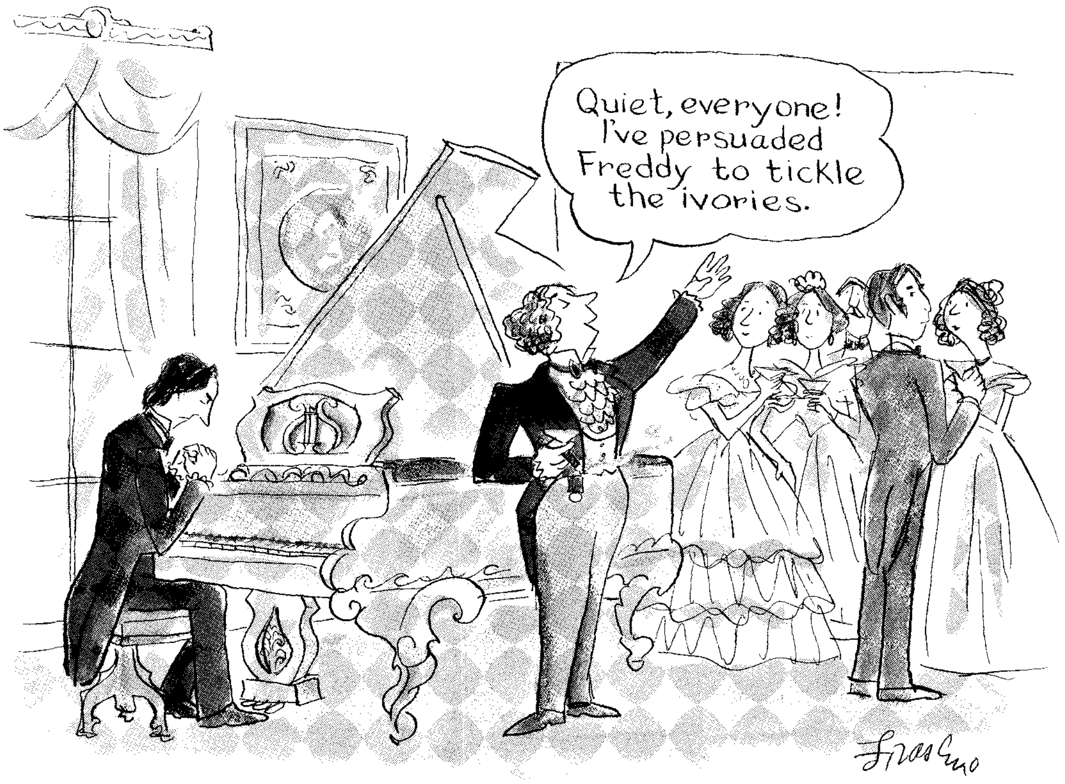
"There's Shea and there's Antonia," said Ed Aiken.

"All right," said Earl. "The junior class there at Morrisville-Wylie is having a dance against vandalism, and this Shea Jewell said they want you to be a chaperone. They had Rollie Wilson from the E.M.T.s, but you know Wilson's had that fire."

"We'll see," said Dan.

"It's semi-formal," said Earl.

"We'll see," said Dan. He unplugged the projector, took the slides, and left. It was still snowing. He drove back toward Grafton on the gravel and found himself coming up on Tiny and Louise's place. Their yardlight blinked through the trees. Tiny and Louise rented the white farmhouse that used to be the Harvey and Iris Klar place and was still owned by the Klars' daughter Jean, who lived thirty miles away, in Reinbeck, and had a job that had something to do with the brick-and-tile company there.


Quiet, everyone! I've persuaded Freddy to tickle the ivories.

GEORGE SAND HAS SOME PEOPLE IN FOR DRINKS

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Dan pulled in the driveway and got out. A white square-headed dog bolted from the toolshed and came leaping over the fine blue snow. The dog hardly made a sound, and Dan talked to him until he headed back to the shed. Meanwhile, Louise Darling had opened the front door. Someone had lined the foundation with hay bales—that was good. Louise wore jeans and a white sweatshirt. Dan stepped inside, closed the door, and noticed that Louise was not wearing any shoes or socks. The living room was dark except for the violet TV light.

Louise turned on a table lamp. "Where's Tiny?" she said. She had long full brown hair parted on the side. Over in the corner a sleek black camera stood on a tripod—Louise worked for Kleeborg's photography in Stone City.

"Tiny got in a fight with Bob Becker at the Lime Bucket," said Dan. "Tiny's fine, but he's drunk, so I took him to the Morrisville jail for overnight."

"He's not hurt," said Louise.

"No," said Dan. "He won the fight."

"What's he charged with?" said Louise.

"I'm not bringing anything," said Dan. "I wash my hands of it. What are you watching?"

"What does that mean," said Louise, "if you wash your hands?"

Dan stared at the TV. "He'll be let go in the morning," he said. "At eight o'clock in the morning they'll let him go when they go off their shift."

Louise went and drank something amber from a small glass. "God damn it," she said. "Why can't people leave Tiny alone?"

Dan sat down on the arm of a chair. "Louise," he said, "in all fairness, people might ask the same of Tiny. He can be pretty obnoxious."

Louise picked up a pack of cigarettes and sat down on the couch. "This is true," she said.

"What *is* this?" said Dan, gesturing toward the TV.

"KROX Comix Classix," said Louise. "There's this tired priest, and this moth is driving him crazy in his room. The priest had to ride a bicycle over rocks all day." Louise lit a cigarette.

"Huh," said Dan.

"It's a comedy set in Italy," Louise said.

They watched that for a minute. Dan

took off his hat and rested it on his knee.

"My face aches," said Louise.

Dan went home in his cruiser. He had a fried-egg sandwich and a bottle of Miller beer. He lived in a turquoise-and-white mobile home outside of Grafton. He looked at the nude slides but they were too small.

Louise painted her toenails—Dan had noticed that. She painted her toenails dark red. He imagined her dabbing away in some empty room of that drafty farmhouse.

AN unusual series of thefts began in February. There were still waves of snow on the ground. The stolen items were huge—combines, feed trucks, even a yellow road grader from the county shed outside Wylie—and seemed to up and vanish. Soon the rumor started that a gang was involved, a possible gang that people nicknamed the Freight Haulers. It was a big stir, with informational meetings and secret suspicions and false alarms.

In the midst of this, old Henry Hamilton had a tractor stolen from his machine shed. When Dan arrived to take the report, Louise Darling was there as well. It was Sunday morning. Louise had blue earmuffs on. Henry kept chickens, and Louise nestled a gray egg carton in the crook of her arm.

They all three went into the machine shed, trailed by Mike, Henry's part-shepherd. The shed had tin sides and a corrugated ceiling of clear green plastic. There was a blue Chevy pick-up, an ancient silver corn picker, and a place where the tractor had been. It was quiet. Henry brought up the Freight Haulers.

"They're supposed to take everything to Texas in secret railroad cars," he said. "This was an Allis-Chalmers, color orange, with a radio. I put an umbrella on for shade in the summer. Of course, that's put away now."

"Did you lock the shed?" said Dan.

"I never have locked," said Henry. "I have all my keys confused in a drawer."

"Might want to rethink that," said Dan.

"I wonder if it was these freight guys," said Louise.

Dan walked around scuffing the dirt floor with his boot. "The whole idea is three-quarters myth," he said.

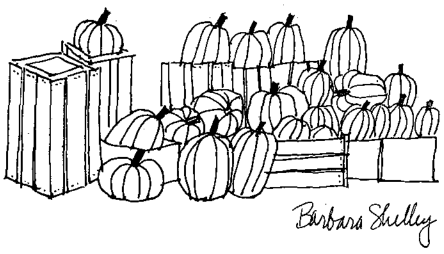
"What?" said Louise, lifting the blue fur off one ear.

"My opinion, it's overblown," said Dan.

"Not according to the fellow from the extension office," said Henry. "He said there are some things you can let go by, but not when they throw it in your face. He wouldn't go beyond that. What a guy ought to do is slip over to the railroad yard and do some asking around with them."

"I thought they just wanted great big items," said Dan.

Henry lit his pipe and fanned out the match. "That was a good-sized tractor," he said.



Mike slowly raised his head and barked once at the lime-colored light through the ceiling.

"Mike's trying to say it was guys from space," said Louise.

"No, Mike sees that swallow poking out his head," said Henry.

Louise and Dan left the shed and walked over by the hog pen in front of Henry's barn. It was cold. Louise's cheeks were red. She slipped the toe of her boot through the rail, and some pigs came over to chew on it.

"You're not missing anything, I hope," said Dan.

Louise pulled the earmuffs from her head. The blue pads coiled together. "There were lights going by last night," she said. "That's all. I thought it could be Tiny. These lights going

I WAKE ALONE

From sleep I wake alone in dead of night,
the house a soundless void. Out there,
a harbor glitters, silent, with its lamps.
But so far removed, so frigid are those lights,
and so immense the stillness of these rooms,
that I raise myself in bed to listen.
And am seized, then, with a fear that stops my breath
and makes my eyes enlarge:
divided from all else within the house,
divided from all else that is on earth,
my life and I are utterly alone.

The thought, then, of the familiar streets
and of the daily names and faces
reasserts itself.
And, smiling for my own absurdity, I settle down.
Yet, even so, when fear dissolves in sleep,
at heart an icy residue persists,
because in truth I walk among my fellow-men
as an observer.
And have not one within whose hands to place
my own in simple trust,
or with whom I can forget myself.
So much so, that were it not
for Nature, for the waters and the trees
and all the speechless world of things
that bears me company through this existence,
I think that I would die of solitude.
For this journey undertaken among strangers,
encompassed by a void,
arouses dread,
and the certainty that it will be forever.

Most cruelly of all,
my eyes are dry.

—CAMILLO SBARBARO

(*Translated, from the Italian, by Shirley Hazzard.*)

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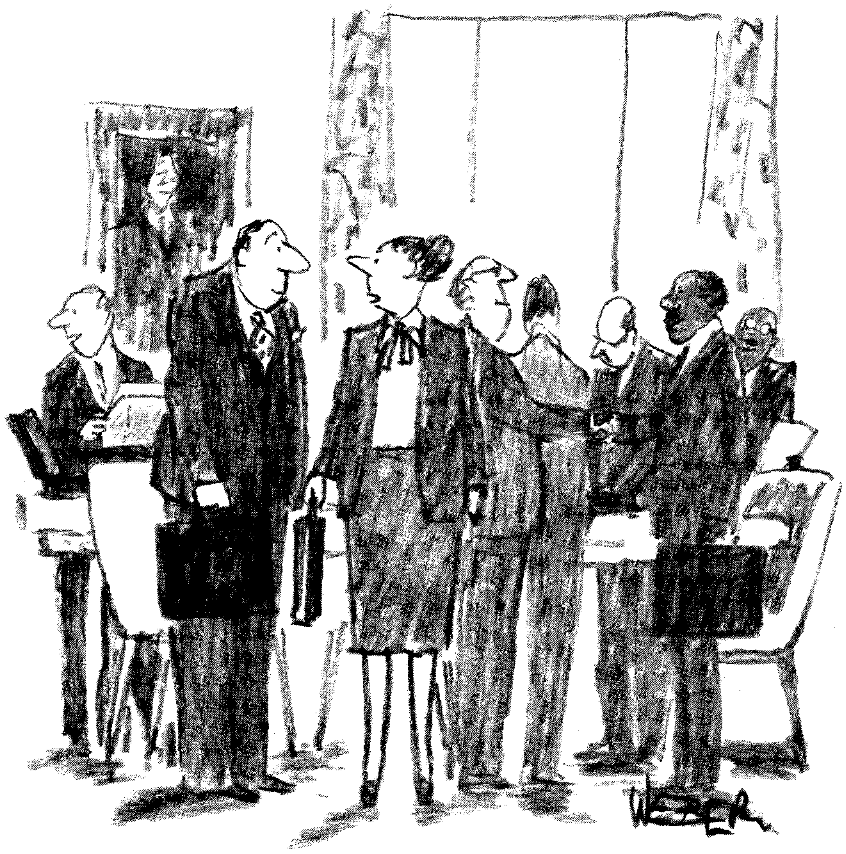


"No, Mr. Kurlander, I don't have, nor have I ever had, a recipe for cranberry muffins."

• •

up and down the wallpaper. Tiny and I got separated, and it occurred to me he might be mad about that."

"You and Tiny?" said Dan. "No kidding."

Louise wiped her nose with the back of her glove. "We weren't getting along," she said. "We would talk but it wouldn't be about anything."

"What makes you say he might be mad?" said Dan.

"Who wouldn't be?" said Louise. "It was seven years, practically. You begin to wonder what you had in mind the whole time."

"Did he ever threaten to or actually hit you?" said Dan.

"No," said Louise. "He might have taken a swing but it never would hurt."

"Because there's no reason you have to sit around living in fear," said Dan. "That isn't written anywhere."

"Not mad like that," said Louise. "Tiny would never hurt the individual person. More frustrated kind of mad."

"But you're still on the farm," said Dan.

"I still am," said Louise. "Tiny went to live with his brother Jerry Tate in Pringmar. It's good in the sense that Jerry racked up his snowmobile on New Year's Eve. He was wearing a scarf that got caught in the belt thing."

"God damn," said Dan.

Louise opened and closed the egg box. "Jerry is lucky to be alive," she said. "It's a trial separation."

"We can give you what we call special attention," said Dan. "We can come by your place on our patrols. It's not really the height of security but it's still something."

"All's I have is the rusty Vega," said Louise. "The whole bottom is about to shear off. They could haul that freight right now—it'd be O.K. with me."

"You know, though," said Dan, "sometimes you drive by a pickup and it might be parked on the shoulder with the flashers on. Now, say there's baled straw all over the road, maybe there's a man, there's a woman picking up the bales. Well, it's easy to see what happened. But it's too late to tie them tighter, obviously."

"O.K., I'm lost," said Louise, and she blinked. She had large green eyes and when she blinked Dan could almost hear her eyelids going *poink, poink*.

"When the bales fall off," said Dan.

Henry came around the corner of the barn with a bucket in his hand. "That's right, you needed eggs," he said. He led them into the low red chicken house. The room was warm and hazy and full of straw. The chickens beat their wings and ran like mad in every direction.

DAN got the crop duster Paul Francis of Kesley to take him up to look for the stolen machinery. They got off from the Stone City airport and headed south. The county had its winter colors—gray and bark brown shot through with strips of pale white. After a while, Paul, like all small-plane pilots in Dan's experience, wanted Dan to try the wheel.

"Look left," said Paul. "Look right. Look up. You even have to look up."

The sun came out. "Where would you put a road grader?" said Dan.

"Keep your eyes moving," said Paul. "Where could you bring her down if an emergency happened?"

"Back to you, in that case," said Dan.

The plane, a blue-and-white Piper Cub, droned into the blue air. The engine roared and the heater blasted, but the cold was like a brilliant curtain all around them. When Dan tested the responsiveness of the wheel, the wing tilted and the plane headed into the watery space above them.

"Level, level," said Paul. Dan scanned a row of black instruments. To the left of some gauge he did not understand he saw a red-and-gold medallion—"The Sky Is Thine, O Lord."

"You're not looking," said Paul. "Disregard the panel at this stage. I'll tape them gauges up with masking tape."

"I hate this," said Dan. "I don't want to be the pilot. That's what you're for, and how about taking me over Martins Woods? I mean it. Lesson over, king's ex."

"All right," said Paul.

They said nothing for a while. Dan watched the snowy fields, the shimmering creeks, the cars on slick blacktop.

"Have you given any thought to joining our Methodist prayer group?" said Paul.

"No," said Dan.

They flew for another hour. When

Paul came in to land at Stone City he didn't like the set of his wings, so he *pulled up and went around again.* They flew right into the sun, and Dan put his hand up over his eyes. Paul still wasn't overly pleased with the setup, but he brought the plane bouncing down on the runway. Dan banged his ear against the door of the plane.

Dan met Louise at Kleeborg's Portraits at the end of the day. They took the cruiser out to a tuxedo shop on Old Highway 18. There was one green car in the parking lot.

"It looks pretty closed," said Dan.

"No, because it's Thursday, and all the retail stores are open until nine on Thursday," said Louise. "Is this like a date?"

Dan got out of the car, and Louise joined him on the sidewalk, where they stood looking in at the rows of shiny jackets. "You can't tell me this place isn't closed," said Dan.

But he pushed the door, and it opened. Behind a partition a small barrel-chested man in jeans and pointy sideburns and tiny cowboy boots was holding a pink cummerbund to the light. "The lady left," he said. "There was a lady here a while ago, but now she's left."

"Are those flares?" said Louise, pointing to the cuffs of the man's jeans.

"They're boot cut," he said, and then he was out the door.

Louise watched him drive away in the green car. "Boot cut, my ass," she said.

Dan ventured into a little room in back. A woman lay on a green vinyl couch with her eyes closed.

"Is she dead?" said Louise.

Dan shook his head. "Her stomach's moving," he said. "I think she's asleep."

They went back to the store part. A scrawled sign said ten per cent off everything. "I have a black coat," said Dan. "And I have black pants. So all's I need, pretty much, is a tie." He picked up a narrow bow of red plaid, held it under his chin, and cleared his throat.

"Wait," said Louise. She found a white shirt in cellophane and pressed it to his chest. "As far as the look, I like it," she said, "but I think you're not supposed to wear plaid unless it's the actual tartan of your clan."

"Keep in mind this is only semi-formal," said Dan.

"It was on 'National Geographic,' " said Louise, "that's all I can tell you."

"I forget which tartan my clan does favor," said Dan.

"Get the shirt, too," said Louise. She went over and tried on a powder-blue jacket with winged lapels. Her fingertips barely cleared the cuffs as she turned before a three-way mirror. "Check out this ugly son of a bitch," she said.

Dan slipped the tie in his pocket and came over. Louise looked into the planes of the mirror, her hair tucked into the jacket collar. Dan lifted Louise's hair and laid it like cloth on her shoulders. He saw a row of her in the mirror. She pressed the back of her neck against his hands. Her eyes closed, then opened; *poink.*

"You hurt your ear," she said. They began to kiss.

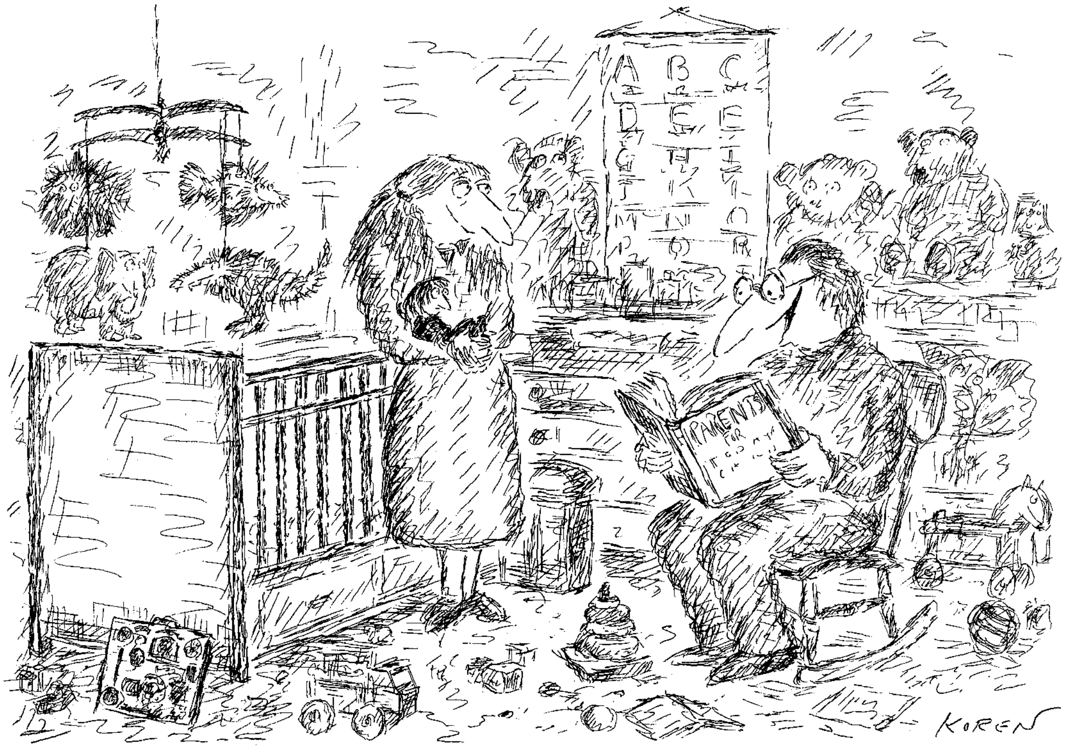
Dan stationed himself near the punch table at the Grafton gym to watch out for spikers at the End of Vandalism Dance. He spoke with Mrs. Thorsen, the small, strangely high-waisted math teacher. A band called Brian Davis and Slagheap played popular songs plus some covers they had customized to reflect the theme. Every now and then Dan would go to the lobby doors and look out to chase away the drinker kids hanging around the street lamp in their Monte Carlos.

The gym was dark except for stage light, and the music rattled through it like sheets of tin. When the dancing was fast it reminded Dan of the Pony, and when it was slow it reminded him of people huddling in the cold. In the center of the floor the shop class had built a mysterious display. It was a row of tall, pointed wooden slats with a double-hung window built in and a flashing yellow light bolted off the side.

"It's a collage of the different vandalism things," said Mrs. Thorsen. She wore a yellow dress and her eyes were exaggerated by mascara. "You have the fence, the glass, the construction light. They were going to make another one and go ahead and break the glass and paint on the fence, and show the before and the after. I'm not sure why they didn't, because probably it would have been better."

"Probably," said Dan.

"But I'm *not* going to say anything," said Mrs. Thorsen, "because the shop class always takes such intense shit. Every dance is



"*According to this, everything we've done up to now is right.*"

the same. You should have seen their Stairway to Heaven."

After the intermission, Brian Davis came back with Slagheap and played "Rikki Don't Throw That Lumber." Mrs. Thorsen started telling Dan about the chinchillas she was raising with her husband. She practically had to shout. Some disease was making the chinchillas' hair fall out, which is exactly what you don't want.

About this time Tiny entered the gym with a blue wrecking bar. Later everyone would say it had been like a music video, with dancers parting as if by hypnosis and the band playing "China Grove." Dan had his back turned, but Mrs. Thorsen in her yellow dress was watching as Tiny moved past the punch area. He went straight to the vandalism collage and swung the head of the crowbar through the window, spraying glass toward the stage. He exploded the orange light and splintered two planks of the fence. Then Dan got to him and tried to enclose him in his arms. "Whoa, whoa, China Grove," sang the band. Tiny set his shoulders and shrugged out of Dan's hold. Somehow Dan caught the head of the crowbar on the temple. It was probably not intentional, just a little whack on the temple. Dan fell against the fence, and Tiny ran out.

By the time the glass and the other mess had been swept up and Dan had convinced Mrs. Thorsen to go on with the dance, Tiny was gone and the drinker kids had strategically moved their cars to the ball diamond across the street. Dan slipped on his suit coat and got into the cruiser carefully. He knew he had been hit on the head but he thought it was not bad. He tried to radio in about what had happened; something was wrong with the radio. When Dan turned the knob to tune the frequency, it only put out the light behind the dial.

He drove north on the gravel road to Louise's house, where he found her sitting at the kitchen table, with a camera taken apart and neatly laid out in front of her.

"I must be psychic," she said. "I saw a show about police tonight, and here you are in my kitchen."

"Has Tiny been here?" said Dan.

"A couple days ago he was," said Louise. "It was funny what he wanted. He wanted this old shot glass he got one time at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. 'Where's my little Sands glass?' he says. 'Where's my little Sands glass?' I had no idea what he was talking about. I'm going, 'Which glass, Tiny? A glass with sand in it?' But he had to have that glass."

"What did he want it for?" said Dan.

She shrugged, examining a small red-handled screwdriver in her hand. "I guess to drink out of," she said. "He wanted some other glasses, too. I guess his brother Jerry doesn't have much for the kitchen."

"Are you all right?" said Dan.

Louise nodded. "Except for this camera," she said. "Look at it. There are more pieces than I anticipated. If I don't get this camera back together I'm going to be in serious trouble."

Dan looked at the camera parts on the checkered tablecloth. There were springs and mirrors and pins.

"Give me your hand," he said. She did—her fingers were strong, almost hot. "Thanks," he said. They held hands that way, across the table.

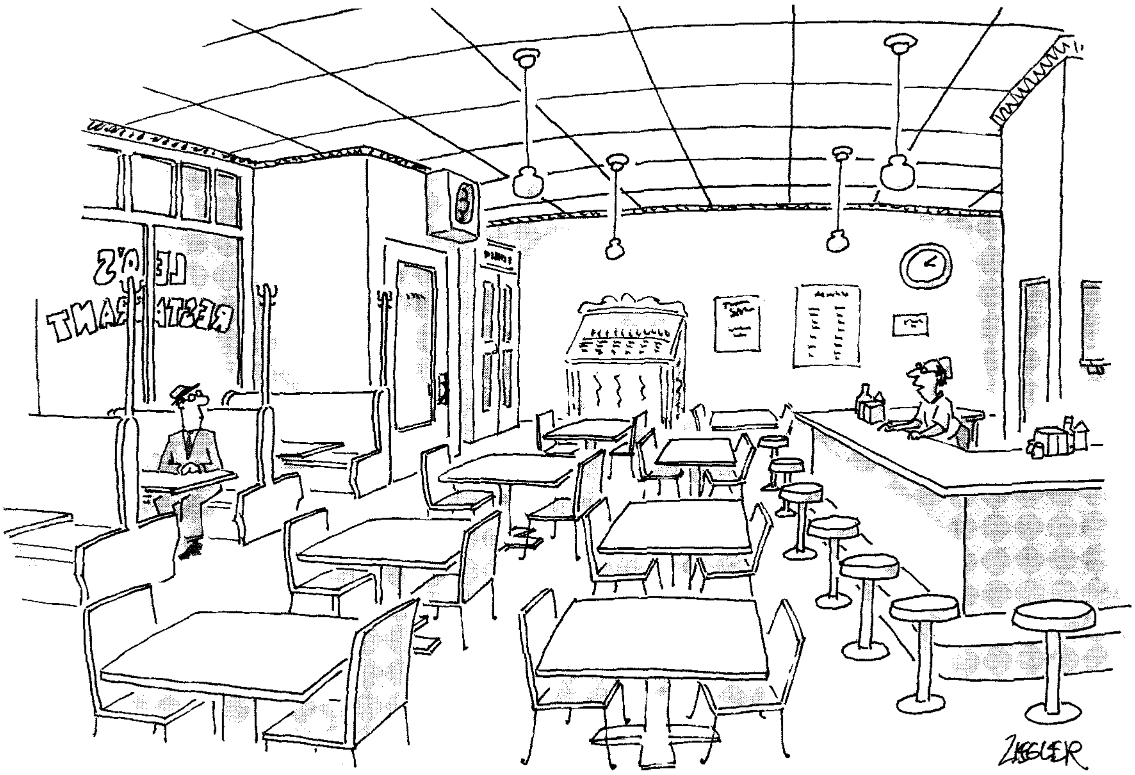
"It's nothing," said Louise.

Dan picked up the deputy Ed Aiken in Morrisville, and they went on to Tiny's brother's place in Pringmar. Jerry Tate lived in a gray bungalow on land that sloped down from the road. Heavy bushes surrounded the house, and Christmas lights still hung in the windows. Jerry Tate invited them in to sit but he said he could not make coffee because he wasn't supposed to move around after nine o'clock.

"I had a run-in with a snowmobile," said Jerry. "Seven little plates have gone out of kilter. I might not come back one hundred per cent. But the doctor says it shouldn't interfere with my plans."

So Ed Aiken made coffee and they drank it, and after a while Jerry said it wasn't his business but it seemed to him that Tiny might keep going if he saw the cruiser out front. Dan and Ed went to move the car and talk things over, and when they came back Jerry had locked the house up and turned out the lights.

—Tom Drury



"The booths are for parties of four or more."

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE WINDOW-WASHER

DANIEL KUMERMANN is a large bearded man of thirty-nine, with dark hair and full red lips, who dresses in jeans and dark-blue cotton shirts, wears wire-framed glasses, carries an unruly knapsack filled with books, papers, and odd items, and has about him an air of quiet certitude that is not without a trace of truculence. He lives on the outskirts of Prague with his wife and two children. He is a foreign-affairs journalist; until April of this year, he was a window-washer. In 1978, he had signed the human-rights declaration Charter 77, and for the next twelve years did menial work, as a great many of the other Charter signatories were obliged to do. When I first met him, in January, 1990, he spoke contemptuously of Milan Kundera's novel "The Unbearable Lightness of Being," whose hero, Tomáš, a doctor, refuses to sign a statement of complicity with the Communist authorities, becomes a window-washer, and spends an idyllic two years sleeping with the women whose windows he comes to clean.

"Kundera himself was never forced to work menially," Kumermann said, "and what he wrote about window-washing was complete nonsense." He added, "It's very upsetting to meet Americans and when you tell them what you do they give you a lecherous look. In fact, washing windows is very unpleasant work, and the women you work for do not sleep with you. The women you wash windows for usually regard you as the lowest scum. Kundera writes completely outside of reality here."

"But his book is fiction," I said.

"I know. But everybody in the West reads Kundera's books as if they were accurate portrayals of life in Czechoslovakia under the Communists. If he writes nonsense and nobody reads it, all right. But his books are famous. Everybody reads them and thinks they are true. Actually, Kundera is not a Czech author anymore. He's become something like a French wit. He should write about France rather than about Czechoslovakia."

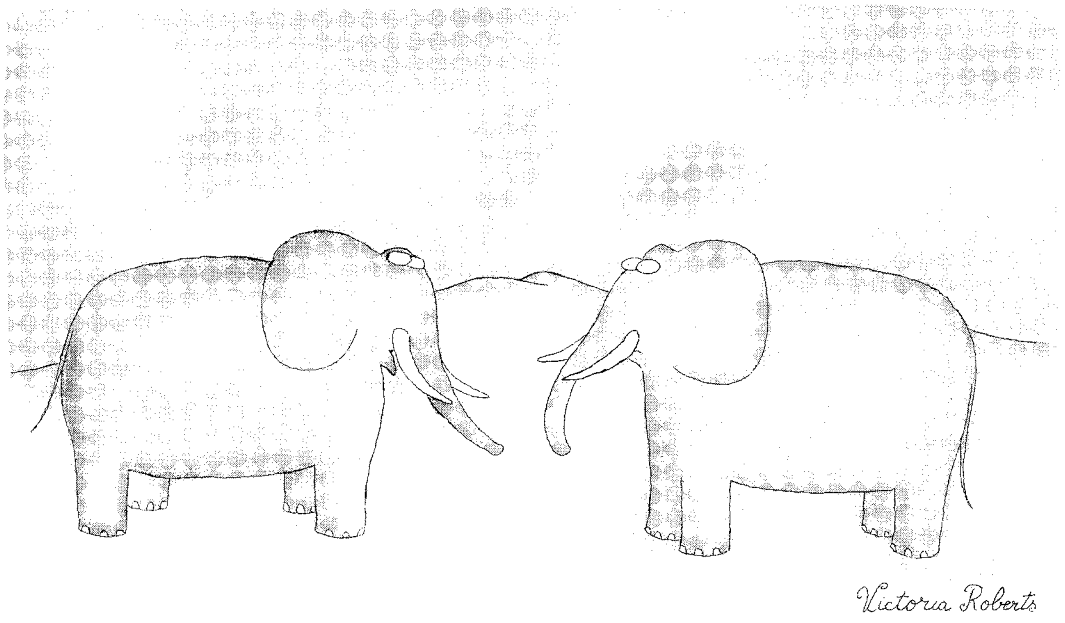
Kumermann was voicing a view of Kundera I had heard before; many of Kundera's countrymen had disliked and resented "The Unbearable Lightness of Being," and the book's success in the West (Kundera emigrated to France in 1975) only exacerbated the sense of injury felt by those who had stayed in Czechoslovakia and had lived out the reality that Kundera "improved on" in his fable of totalitarianism. The reality had unexpectedly taken a novelistic turn of its own in late 1989, when the gray malaise of police-state existence was overnight transformed into feverish joy, and a shiningly good and intelligent man, Václav Havel, with a small group of fellow-dissidents, rose to the leadership of the nation. Many Czech-Americans—I among them—flocked to Prague to participate in this heady moment.

I'd prefer to have you examine me at home.
But I never make house calls!
On the other hand, she is my wife.

The Doctor's Dilemma

I arrived in Prague in late December, on the morning of Havel's inauguration as President of the Republic. My parents had fled Czechoslovakia and the Nazis with my sister and me in 1939; in fact, all my close Prague relatives had emigrated to America before the Second World War. We were one of the few Jewish families in Prague who had had the extraordinary good fortune to survive intact. Now, fifty years later, I was back, carrying a long list of Prague writers, artists, academics, and editors, and of family friends and distant relatives as well. (The distant relatives on my list were either non-Jewish or sufficiently semi-Jewish to have been spared.) Kumermann's was one of the names on the list.

Everyone in Prague was in a state of manic excitement and frantic activity. Everyone was looking at his watch because he had to be somewhere in fifteen minutes, phones were constantly ringing, appointments were constantly being changed because something had suddenly come up, no one had enough sleep, no one had enough time. After years of nothing happening, something had happened—something beyond anyone's wildest imaginings. People said they felt they were in a wish-fulfillment dream, not in actual life. I



"Go with Hannibal if you must."

had an appointment with Kumermann and his wife, Jarmila, at their apartment, and I arrived terribly late. My previous appointment had left me in a section of Prague where there were no cabs on the street, and a kind stranger had offered me a lift. But he turned out to have almost as poor a grasp of the geography of outlying Prague as I did, and, after long wanderings and blunderings, he brought me to the Kumermanns' door forty-five minutes past the appointed hour. Kumermann and Jarmila gave me tea at a round table in the dining area of their L-shaped living room, while one of the children and Kumermann's mother watched television in the living area, with the sound on quite high. Partly because of the loudness of the television but also because Kumermann insisted on speaking in English (as he later told me, he uses every opportunity to practice conversational English), while his wife and I spoke in Czech, the conversation was somewhat disjointed. On leaving, I again apologized for my lateness. Jarmila, a classically beautiful woman with honey-colored hair that she wears straight to the shoulders with bangs, and a melodious voice and gentle manner, said kindly, "It wasn't your fault."

Daniel Kumermann, standing a bit apart from us, said quietly but clearly, "It was her fault."

I looked at him with surprise and interest.

Jarmila said reproachfully, "How was it her fault, Daniel?"

"She should have taken a taxi at her hotel. A taxi-driver wouldn't have had any trouble finding this place."

"You're right," I said. "But you're very strict."

"I suppose I am."

He accompanied me out of the apartment—he was on his way to meet someone at the Prague airport—and when we were on the street, walking in the dark toward the tram stop, he turned to me and said, in his abrupt, uninhibited way, "You're Jewish, aren't you?" I nodded, and he went on, "I am half-Jewish—on my father's side. My father was an intellectual, and he married an uneducated woman who worked in an office. They separated when I was seventeen. I naturally gravitated toward my father's side. When I was twenty-two, I converted to Judaism and joined the Prague Jewish Community."

On the tram, Kumermann paid my fare, and when I offered to reimburse him he waved my money away and said, "You can repay me another way. Do you chew gum? No? Well, you can send me chewing-gum wrappers anyway. I collect them. I also collect comics. You can send me chewing-gum wrappers and comics from New York." We changed to the metro, and parted at Wenceslas Square. I went on to dinner with a professor from Charles University who had very polished manners, and when I returned to New York I told the friends who had given me the Kumermanns' address that I had liked her enormously but had not taken to him. Then, in April, I made a second trip to Prague, and in packing for it I oddly found myself putting in a number of chewing-gum packets and comic books.

KUMERMANN, I found on my return to Prague, was just starting a career in journalism. He had a job as an editor and writer on foreign affairs at a monthly magazine—one of the eighty-odd new publications that had emerged since December. We made a date for lunch, and I picked him up at his office on Pařížská Ulice, a street of handsome Art Nouveau buildings which replaced a section of the old Jewish quarter when much of it was torn down in the early nineteen-hundreds. His office—a room on the fourth floor, with high ceilings, tall, graceful windows, and ornate moldings—was furnished with fifties Soviet-modern office furniture of pale wood, a sofa and an armchair covered with a fabric of an ugly modernistic design, and a cheap green rug; the place had a bare, improvised look, as if furniture had been hastily dragged out of storerooms for occupants who had not yet properly moved in. Kumermann shared the office, and its only typewriter, with an older colleague, another former dissident who had done menial work. He was alone when I arrived, working at the typewriter. When I presented him with my gift of gum and comics, he glanced at each item expressionlessly and then thrust the lot into his knapsack. I said apologetically, "These must all be things you already have." He corrected me: "Not all of them."

The colleague came in, a man in his sixties with very pale skin and sandy hair and a pleasant manner. Kumermann somewhat grudgingly introduced me, and then conversed with him about some magazine matter. When the colleague left, carrying a tape recorder he had taken from his desk, he paused in the doorway and addressed a courtly, mildly witty remark to me.

After he was gone, Kumermann said, "What a charmer. He must have been something with women when he was younger."

"I know the type," I said. "It was common among Czech émigrés when I was growing up in New York."

"I'm not that type," Kumermann said.

"I know," I said, and added, "This has struck me about you. You're more like a certain kind of New York Jew than like a Czech."

"Yes, I cultivate this Jewish thing as a kind of defense against the Czech milieu."

"So you feel you're a Jew rather than a Czech?"

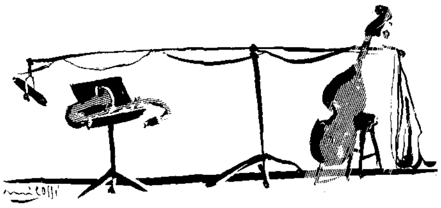
"No, not *rather*. The Czech nation can be a very disappointing nation, so as a Jew I can say I don't belong to it. I know this is only a kind of escape, since, after all, my education was Czech; Czech is the language and culture to which I belong. But it was a particularly nice form of escape in the early seventies. In the sixties, Czechoslovakia became a country one could feel proud to belong to, but in the seventies everything dissolved into despair and loss of values and people turning coats. This is something that happens quite often in Czech history. The Czech nation is a great example of the phenomenon of surviving by giving up."

We went to lunch. Kumermann took me around the corner to Prague's only kosher eating place, in the Jewish Town Hall, which was built in the late sixteenth century (and reconstructed in the eighteenth) as the administrative and social center of the Prague Jewish Community, which now numbers around one thousand. (This number represents the people who have registered with the Community, most of whom are secular Jews. Before the war, there were forty-five thousand registered and unregistered Jews in Prague; today there are three thousand.) The restaurant serves inexpensive kosher food between eleven-thirty and two; foreign guests pay double what Czechs pay—thirty crowns (about a dollar) as against twelve to fifteen. The meals, Kumermann told me, are subsidized by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a philanthropic organization based in New York.

We hung up our coats on hooks along a wall of a small lobby in which announcements were posted and men in yarmulkes milled, and got in a line outside the dining hall. Kumermann pulled a yarmulke out of his knapsack and attached it to his head with bobby pins. When we reached the head of the line, an old woman at a counter took our money and handed each of us a bottle of mineral water, a small plate of salad, and a small plate of plain cake. We carried this to a table covered with a white tablecloth and set with glasses and white china soup bowls containing cutlery and paper napkins. In the middle of the table—it was Passover week—there was a platter of matzoth covered with a white cloth.

The dining hall was a large, somewhat sombre high-ceilinged room with dark wood panelling, ornamented plaster columns painted beige, a balcony, and, at one end, a small proscenium-arch stage, on which stood a piano and a menorah. Posters of Israel were taped here and there onto the panelling, and near the entrance hung a black-and-white eight-by-ten framed photograph of Barbra Streisand, inscribed by her at the time of the filming of "Yentl" nearby. A single waitress moved deliberately and unhurriedly between the kitchen and the tables, bringing first a soup of mushrooms and vegetables and barley, then plates of beef and gravy and dumplings; she served the soup from a pot, ladling it out with a metal cup. The wait was fairly long, but people sat calmly and confidently; there was none of the tension and anxiety that slow service evokes in New York restaurants. I was to find this serenity about waiting characteristic of eating places throughout Prague. But the food at the Jewish Town Hall was uncharacteristically good—plain, wholesome, prepared with tact and grace, as if by a gifted home cook. Restaurant food in Prague today is generally dismal. There is a Czech word that nicely describes its dominant quality: *upatlaný*. Something is *upatlaný* when it has been handled too much, has lost all freshness and integrity, has a muddled, overcombined character. One gets the feeling that something is being hidden in the strange messes one finds on one's plate in Prague—there is much talk in Czechoslovakia today about poisonous chemicals in meat and about produce that has been grown in too much fertilizer—but one remembers that food in Czech restaurants in New York has never inspired confidence, either.

As we waited for our kosher lunch, Kumermann told me about his late father, Jaroslav Kumermann, who had escaped the Holocaust by going to Palestine in 1939 and joining the British Army there. "Before the war, he was quite rich," Kumermann said. "He was



THE RED DRESS

Some autumn leaves create a space in the shape of a red dress.
Faceless, heartless, cool
Where the eyes would be, it makes a rather artless citizen

Floating sulkily above a pedestal of maples, an inadvertent fund of spirits
For some other planet whose weary inhabitants can't reach Earth.

There is a tiny body that lives its entire life inside our mind,
The ultimate hermit, the chaste lover who stays
For the sake of something that happened long ago, something

We originally thought little about that has had consequences,
Like a good Greek tragedy.

"That is the dress I want to wear when I die," I tell the hermit.
"When I am no longer the terrified audience, the translator between us,
When you and I, after years of betrayals, switch places."

—Vickie Karp

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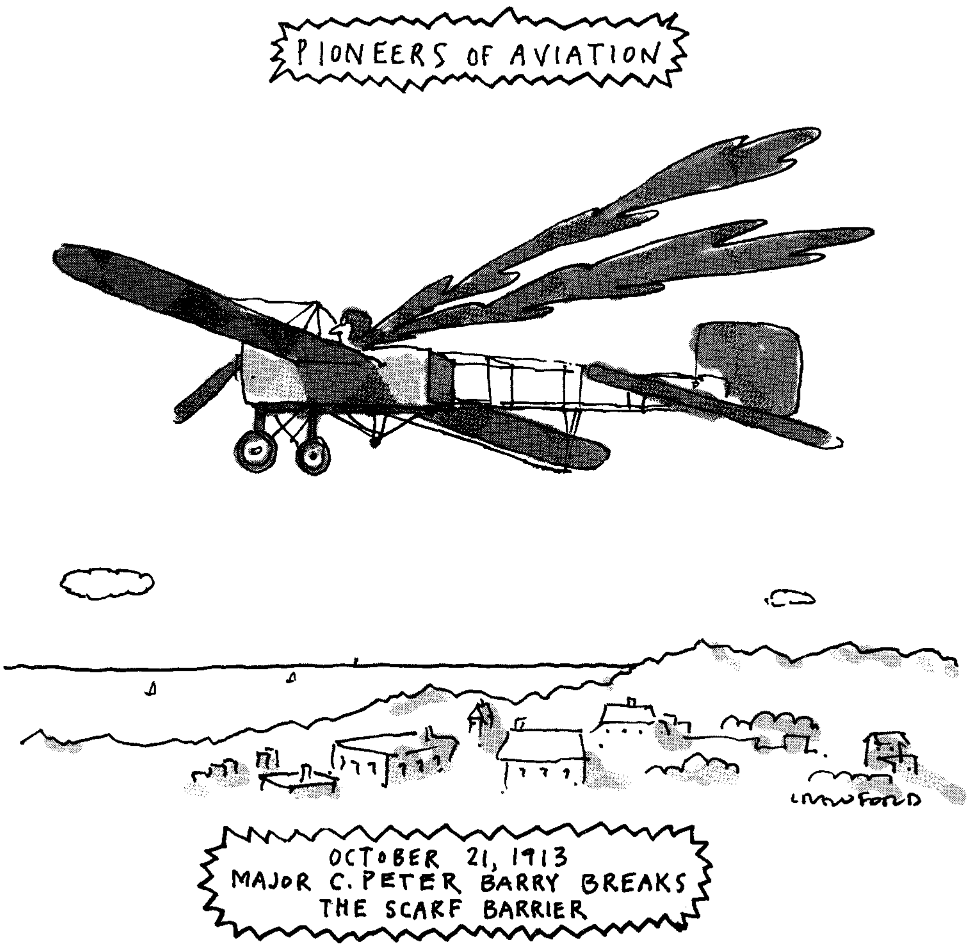


an assimilated Czech Jew who spent a lot of his time in Prague cafés in intellectual discussions. At the university, he unfortunately chose to study chemistry, which he never should have done, since he had no head for exact science. He should have studied the humanities. He was an only child, whose mother cared too much for him. He never finished anything. He tried various business ventures, at which he failed terribly, because he had no head for business, either. There was finally one thing he proved he could do, and that was selling insurance. He could talk well, he was a kind of charmer, so he managed to sell quite a lot of insurance. That's where he made his money. After the war, he returned to Prague—he found life in Palestine too harsh—but he was never able to establish himself again. When the Communists came, although he was never openly persecuted he had no chance to prove himself. There was no more insurance to sell. He couldn't succeed at anything. He wasn't even able to find a decent flat. I grew up in a two-room flat that had no water in it and a toilet outside. Because my father never got up enough inner strength—enough pushiness—to get a better flat, my mother finally moved away; she got some money for a flat from her sisters abroad. As I told you, my mother was a completely different person from my father. They didn't understand each other, they couldn't coöperate with each other."

The waitress poured out our soup, and Kumermann paused to eat a few spoonfuls. I asked him when and how he had come to join the Community.

"I was twenty-two when I first heard of it. Someone brought me to the Town Hall, and I started going to lectures here and services at the synagogue, and in a few months I was completely caught up in Judaism. I felt that this was it. Then I had to have this nice little operation."

"You weren't circumcised as a baby?"

"No. It isn't normally done here. So I had to have it done. It was performed in a hospital in Northern Bohemia where there was a Jewish surgeon. He even knew the *b'rachos*, so he said what it was necessary to say. Then I had a *tevilah* in the Vltava, and a bar mitzvah. Now they call me to minyan. Sometimes it's difficult to get a minyan here. When there are tourists, it's not a problem, but in winter, when there are few tourists and the old people who make up most of the congregation can't get out, they sometimes call me."

"How do you feel about being part of such a small group?" I asked.

"It suits my kind of personality better than being part of a majority," Kumermann said, not picking up my reference to the absent forty-two thousand. He went on, "After I joined the Community, I chewed out my father for not having introduced me to Judaism earlier. He always said, 'It's not safe. In every generation there is some problem with being Jewish.' But deep down he was glad I had become a Jew. He couldn't communicate it, but his Jewishness was important to him—it was him."

"How do you know the expression 'chewed out'?" I asked. At Kumermann's insistence, we always spoke English, of which he had a near-perfect command; he spoke with only a slight accent, and his mastery of colloquial language and nuance was remarkable. (His chief mistake was sometimes leaving out articles, which don't exist in Czech.)

"It comes from the comic strip 'Beetle Bailey,' " Kumermann replied. He told me that he had begun to collect comics when he was a boy. During the summer months, he and his mother were allowed to go to Vienna to visit his mother's mother and one of her sisters, and it was there that he first encountered Western comics—"Mickey Mouse," "Donald Duck," "Felix the Cat." Later, the "Peanuts" strips provided an illumination. "Suddenly, I saw that there was an intellectual dimension to comics—there was more to them than providing pleasure for the youngest members of society. I saw that comics can comment on society as well as reflect it." When, as an English major at Charles University, he learned that there were serious American scholars of comics, he felt he had "intellectual clearance" for writing his master's thesis on comics as a cultural phenomenon. To do his research, he wrote everywhere. "I have an uncle in Connecticut, a doctor, who emigrated to America in 1964. He rejects comics as stupid, but he was willing to send two theoretical books about them. What I wrote in my thesis doesn't express my ideas now, because my sources were very limited. I wrote about comics that I knew were important but had never seen."

Kumermann accepted my offer of the beef and gravy on my plate, and went on to speculate that some of his fascination with comics might have derived from the Communists' dislike of them. "Comics were considered an imperialist diversion—against humanity, an opiate of the masses—and that may have been part of the attraction for me: my enemy's enemy."

I asked him when he had begun to think of the Communists as his enemy.

"Ever since I can remember, I have always considered Communists some kind of lower creatures. I always heard bad things about them at home. They were always tied to the word 'whore,' they were always something unspeakable. I never had any doubt about this regime being bad and the First Republic being good. We were very poor, and I blamed the Communists for that, though as I grew older, and saw that there were people who lived much better than we did, I realized that our poverty was also due to my father's complete incompetence."

"You didn't openly rebel against the regime until later?"

"Let's say my rebellion was individual. I was always a bit choleric by nature, and when I was in the ninth grade and didn't like what a teacher did I sent him to ass—where you say 'Go to hell,' we say '*Jdi do prdele*,' or 'Go to ass.' I was always this kind of individual rebel."

"What happened when you said that to the teacher?"

"Nothing. He just didn't like me. He had never liked me before, and this didn't make him like me more. I was a kind of extravagant person. No teacher was ever undecided about me. Either they liked me very much or they hated me. When you look at the people who signed the Charter, you'll find that many of them had the same kinds of problems in school that I had. You suddenly realize that these people didn't just happen to be dissidents; they were determined to be dissidents. You don't choose it—it chooses you. There's a kind of mental predisposition among people who can't put up with false authority."

"Were you one of the original two hundred and forty-two signers of the Charter?"

"No," Kumermann said, and told of an initial period of equivocation. In 1977, he had a job as a computer programmer on a six-month trial basis, and, not wanting to immediately wreck his chances for a permanent position, he had placed himself in a special category of signers, whose names were kept secret. He lost the job anyway and, after failing to find permanent work in the field, openly resigned the Charter in the summer of 1978. Thereafter, only menial work was available to him. During the next twelve years, he was arrested five times and was taken in for interrogation more often than he can remember.

A woman with short blond curly hair stopped at our table, and she and Kumermann chatted amicably for a few minutes. After she left, Kumermann remarked, in his blunt way, "That's a girl I might have married."

"A fellow-student?" I asked.

"Yes. She also studied English, and she is also Jewish. I was interested in her, but she didn't want to marry me. I was dating her, and she always said no, and we went on in this unsure way for months, and it was too much for me. When she changed her mind, I was already about to marry Jarmila. So it was a bit too late. Looking back at the last twelve years, I'm not sure if she could have stood the kind of life I've led."

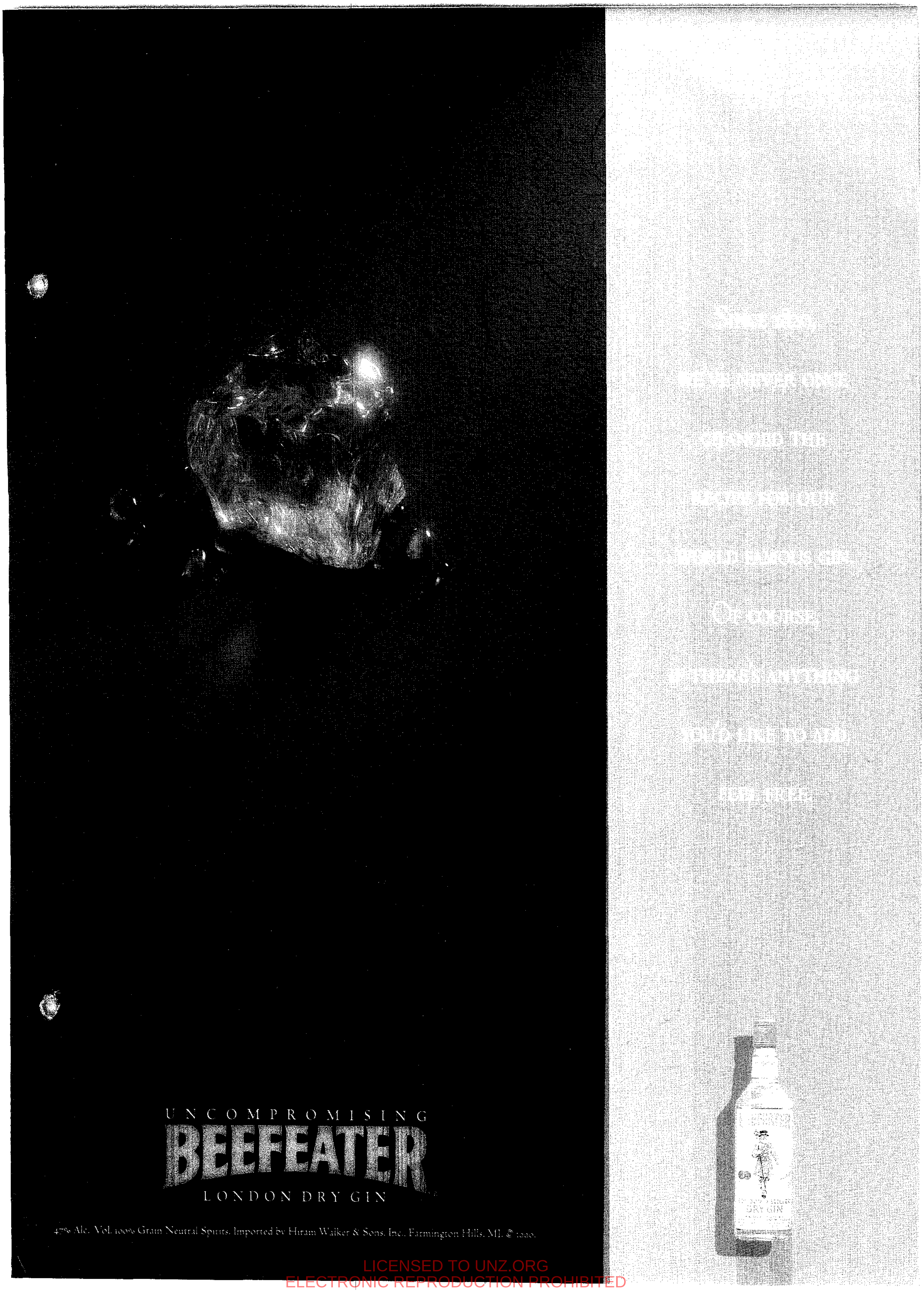
I said, "These people who interrogated you—are they still around?"

"Yes," Kumermann said. "They are. It's funny—we have a kind of supermarket three tram stops away, and who should I see shopping there with his wife the other day but one of my interrogators. I said to myself, 'Should I go up to him and say "*Ještě pořád fizlujete*?" '—'Are you still spying?'—and then I thought, Forget it. He was one of the milder ones. I always had two. There was the one who dealt with the political side of it—the Charter—and the other, who dealt with the Jewish side of it."

"The Jewish side of it?"

"They had an anti-Jewish department. They called it the Anti-Zionist Department, actually. The political interrogator was very unpleasant, very rude, very aggressive. He never hit me, but he threatened to. He was not stupid, but he was crude and unpolished. The other one, the anti-Zionist one, was intelligent, polite, gentlemanly, always trying to catch you by reasoning. He was softer, but more dangerous. He was replaced by the one I met in the supermarket, who was just a plain idiot. He wasn't aggressive or bad; he didn't abuse me. He was just stupid. One day, he said to me—he was

"Who should I wear to this party?"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always trying to present himself as very clever and well educated—'Do you know how the ghetto came into existence?' I said, 'In sixteenth-century Venice, the Jews were forced to live in a certain area that was walled in.' And he said, 'No. The rich Jews fenced in the poor Jews, the better to parasite on them.' I said, 'That's not true. Even Marx wouldn't say so.' And he looked at me seriously and said, 'But I say so.' That was the end of the interrogation—he had put himself above Marx, and when the enormity of that sank in, there was nothing further he could say. In a way, it was great fun. Most of the Charter signers were accused of working with the C.I.A., and I was accused of working with the Israeli Mossad. They thought in James Bond terms. Also, they believed that America was ruled by Jews."

"They really believed this? They weren't just harassing you?"

"They really believed it. They had persuaded themselves of these conspiracy theories. What helped me quite a lot was that they could never accept the idea that any adult of sane mind would devote himself to comics and chewing-gum wrappers. They thought of me as an idiot, and finally they wrote me off. For the last six or seven years, they left me pretty much alone."

After lunch, Kumermann hurried back to his office to prepare for an interview he had been granted with Yasir Arafat, who was in Prague for talks with Havel. We agreed to meet again at his apartment the following afternoon.

THAT evening, I dined at the apartment of the professor with polished manners I had met in January. I will call him Egon Valenta. He had not signed the Charter. Like the majority of the people in Prague who had demonstrated in Wenceslas Square during the incredible days of the velvet revolution, he and his wife—whom I will call Jana—did not have the serenity and the clear conscience of the opposition movement. The Valentas had been in what was called the "gray zone," between the active collaborationists and the dissidents. They had not done anything very bad, but they had not distinguished themselves, had taken no risks, and when that longest of long shots, the mangy nag of the dissidents, miraculously came in, they felt rueful about not having put their

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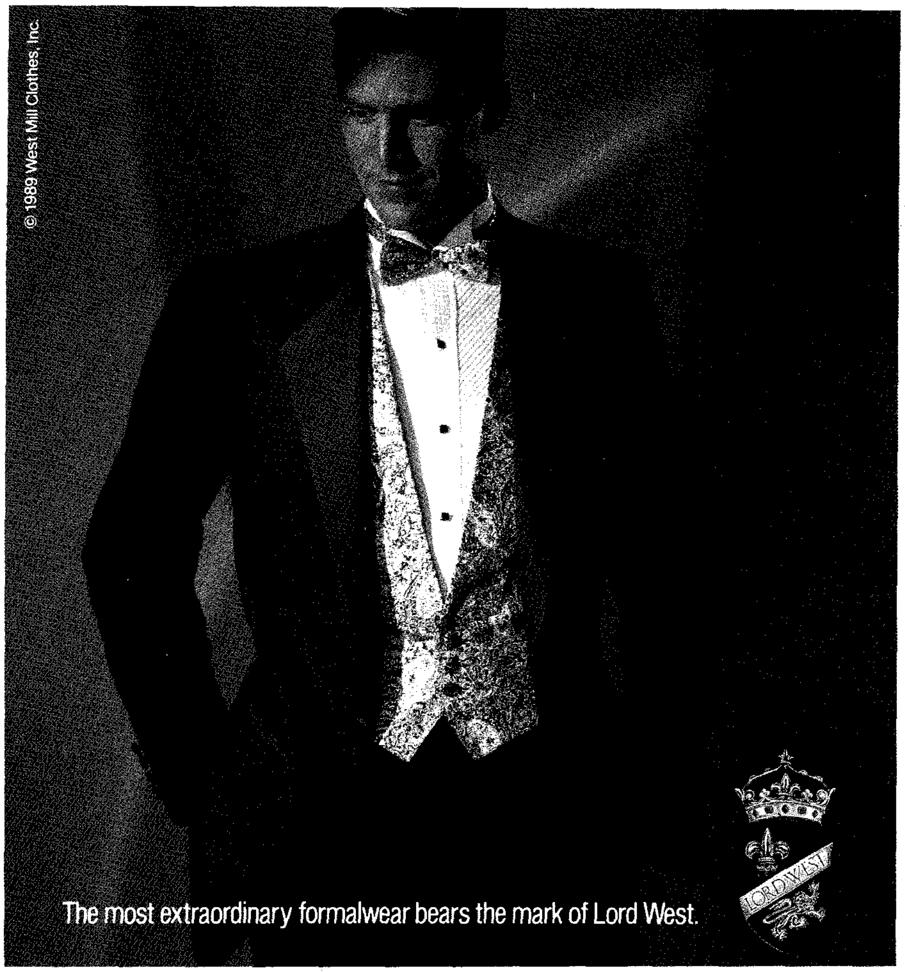
money on it. They felt obscurely ashamed, and disappointed in themselves. At our meeting in January, Valenta had adumbrated this complicated feeling to me, and now he and Jana elaborated on it. We sat in the living room of their apartment, on the Smetana embankment facing the Vltava, drinking vodka and eating little hors d'oeuvres of *upatlaný* canned crabmeat. The room was furnished with a combination of old things (glass-front bookcases, a vitrine of bibelots, a family portrait, a Persian carpet) and contemporary art and objects (abstract paintings, yarn wall hangings, tribal masks), along with a television set, stereo equipment, and the polyester lace curtains that are ubiquitous in Prague. The result was oddly depressing. As Kumermann's bare office had the look of a place that no one had taken possession of yet, the Valentas' fully furnished apartment had the aspect of a place whose inhabitants had already moved away: in both cases, the place and the inhabitants were not fully connected. The Valentas' one child, a twenty-four-year-old son, whom I will call Ivan, lived with them; until the early eighties, Egon Valenta's parents had also lived with them. The apartment was large, and by law, which allowed only a certain number of square metres to a person, the Valentas should have had to move, but they had been able to bribe an official and stay on. People in Prague spoke openly and unashamedly about the system of corruption by which the machinery of daily life creaked along.

"We are very tired," Valenta said, lighting his second cigarette in the ten minutes since my arrival. He is a man in his early sixties, short and of slight build, bald, with a patrician bearing and a deeply lined, still handsome face, out of which intelligence and self-mockery shine. Around the eyes there is a sort of baffled expression, the trace of a wince. He was wearing a black turtleneck sweater over gray flannel trousers. "Of course we rejoice in the change," he went on. "But for many of us it came too late. If it had happened ten years earlier, I might have been able to pick up the pieces of my life. Now I am too tired and too old."

Jana, a heavyset woman with permed blond hair, who is eight years younger than her husband, pressed me to take another hors d'oeuvre and, when I declined, anxiously offered a plate of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cheese and crackers. She comes from a working-class background and was a typist at the university when she and Valenta met, in the late fifties; she now worked as a secretary at an industrial journal. Traces of great beauty are present in Jana's face, and so are the remains of a strong attachment between husband and wife. Valenta is another charmer, though at the moment he had an abstracted and harried air; there was a certain perfunctoriness about his flirtatiousness. Watching him, I inwardly smiled at the puritanical Kumermann's idea of his officemate as someone who had been beguiling to women "when he was younger"—as if charmers ever stopped being charming. Long ago, obviously, Valenta and Jana had made their pact of accommodation, and the air between them was calm, if a little murky.

"I'm no hero," Valenta said—gratuitously, since the identity of the heroes was never in question in Prague. He added vodka to my nearly full glass and refilled his own empty one. "I was not in the active opposition. I belonged to no dissident group. I did not sign the Charter."

"Did you ever consider doing so?"

"No. I knew many of the signers and respected them. But I never thought anything would come of it. I thought it was pure Don Quixotism. I thought, Why endanger Ivan's education, lose my job, risk Jana's job, when nothing can come of it? I was proved wrong. I miscalculated. Who would have expected a Gorbachev to come along and accelerate the end of the Communist system? I knew it would crumble from within, but I never expected it to happen in my lifetime."

Jana said, "We tried to live like decent people, but it wasn't always possible. We all did things we are ashamed of."

"Like what?" I wanted to ask, but didn't have the heart to.

Jana, who has a very pleasant voice and a direct, sincere manner, coupled with a sort of hostess's chronic nervousness, answered my unspoken question. "For example, a few years ago we were allowed to go to Munich for a conference in Egon's field. After the papers were read, there was a reception. Across the room we recognized one of our old friends from the university who had emigrated to West Germany in the seventies and was now working at Radio Free Europe. But we didn't dare go up to him and speak with him; we knew there were informers in the room. When our friend started in our direction, we silently walked away and pretended we didn't know him."

The story did not seem so shameful to me. The friend must have understood. Was the incident like a screen memory that hides a more painful recollection? Or were the guilt and shame that people like Valenta and Jana felt based on unrealistic expectations of themselves? Was Havel's example of moral purity too glaring a contrast for ordinary human weakness? Czechoslovakia now had a kind of perfect man as its President, a person truly deserving of a people's gratitude and admiration, and it is well known that children of perfect parents have a hard time; children of parents with feet of clay have less trouble overcoming their sense of inferiority and weakness. As the people of Czechoslovakia love Havel, they must on some level, one would think, also hate him and not wish him well. But among the many extraordinary aspects of the Havel phenomenon is that the man disarms even schadenfreude. No one can hate a man who is so free of pretension, so genuine in his humility about himself, so sincerely tolerant of frailty in others. He may be the first completely non-authoritarian world leader in history. But if he makes people in distant places who read his writings feel displeased with themselves for not being as good as he is, one can imagine how he affects his own countrymen, especially those with bad consciences.

Alchemist Brewing Tea

Over dinner, which continued at the coffee table—customary in Prague apartments, where separate dining rooms rarely exist anymore—the talk turned to Kundera. Valenta does not share the popular Czech view of Kundera as a kind of fallen angel. "He is simply our best contemporary writer," Valenta said. "In 'The Book of Laughter and Forgetting' and 'The Unbearable Lightness of Being' he has rendered the reality of life here more vividly and more precisely than any other Czech writer. It does not matter that he wrote these books in France and that they are not works of realism. They are literature, and they are true."

When I quoted Kumermann's comments about Kundera, Valenta nodded impatiently and said, "Yes, people say things like that about Kundera. I've heard them all. But the resentment is about something else. As Oscar Wilde put it, 'The only thing that cannot be forgiven is talent.' " He added, "They also cannot forgive him for having had a life for fifteen years. They profess to prefer the novels of Škvorecký, who hasn't a tenth of Kundera's talent but has devoted his life in exile to the cause of dissident Czech writing." (Josef Škvorecký's publishing house in Toronto, called 68 Publishers, has been printing and distributing the work of banned Czech

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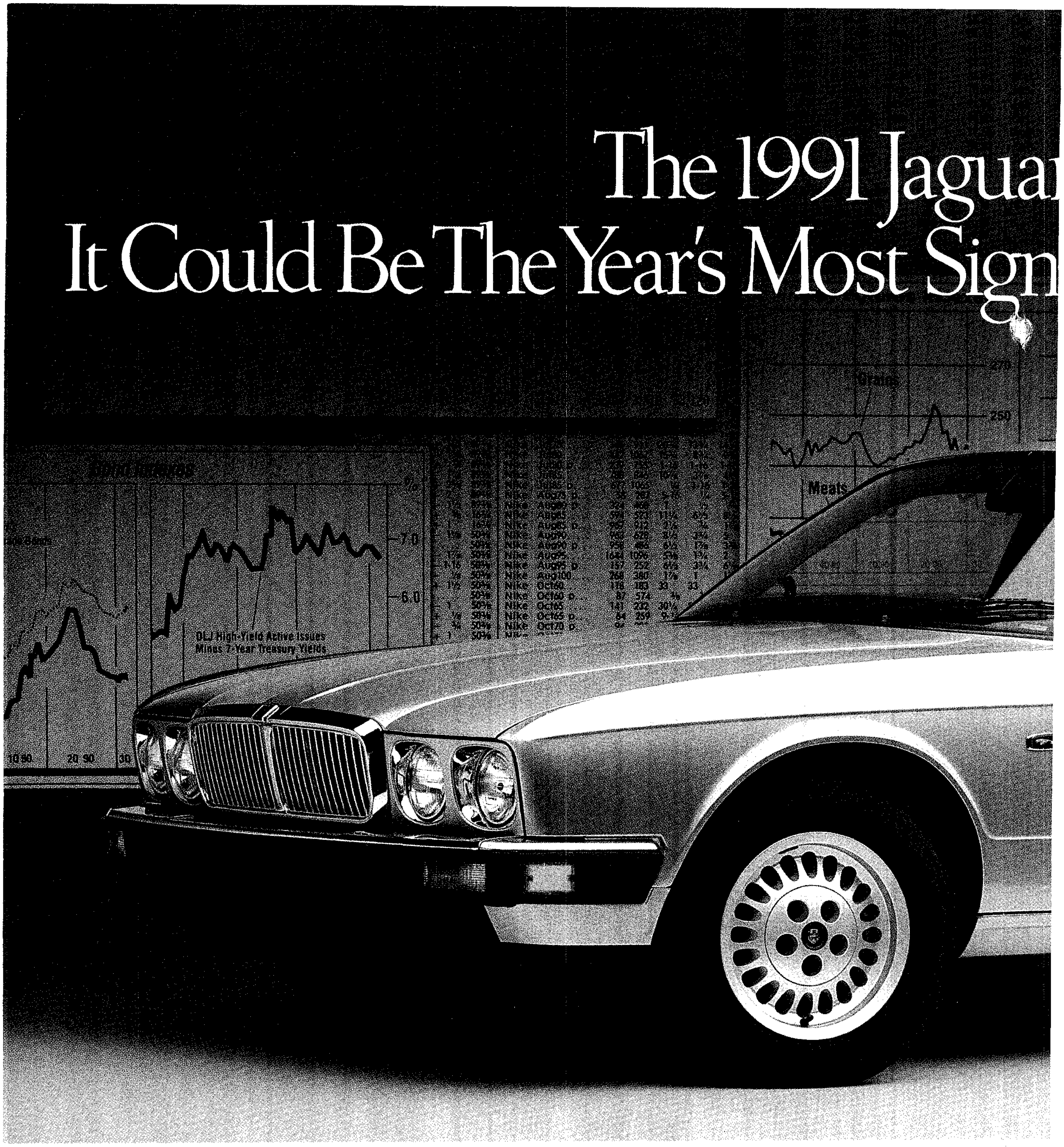
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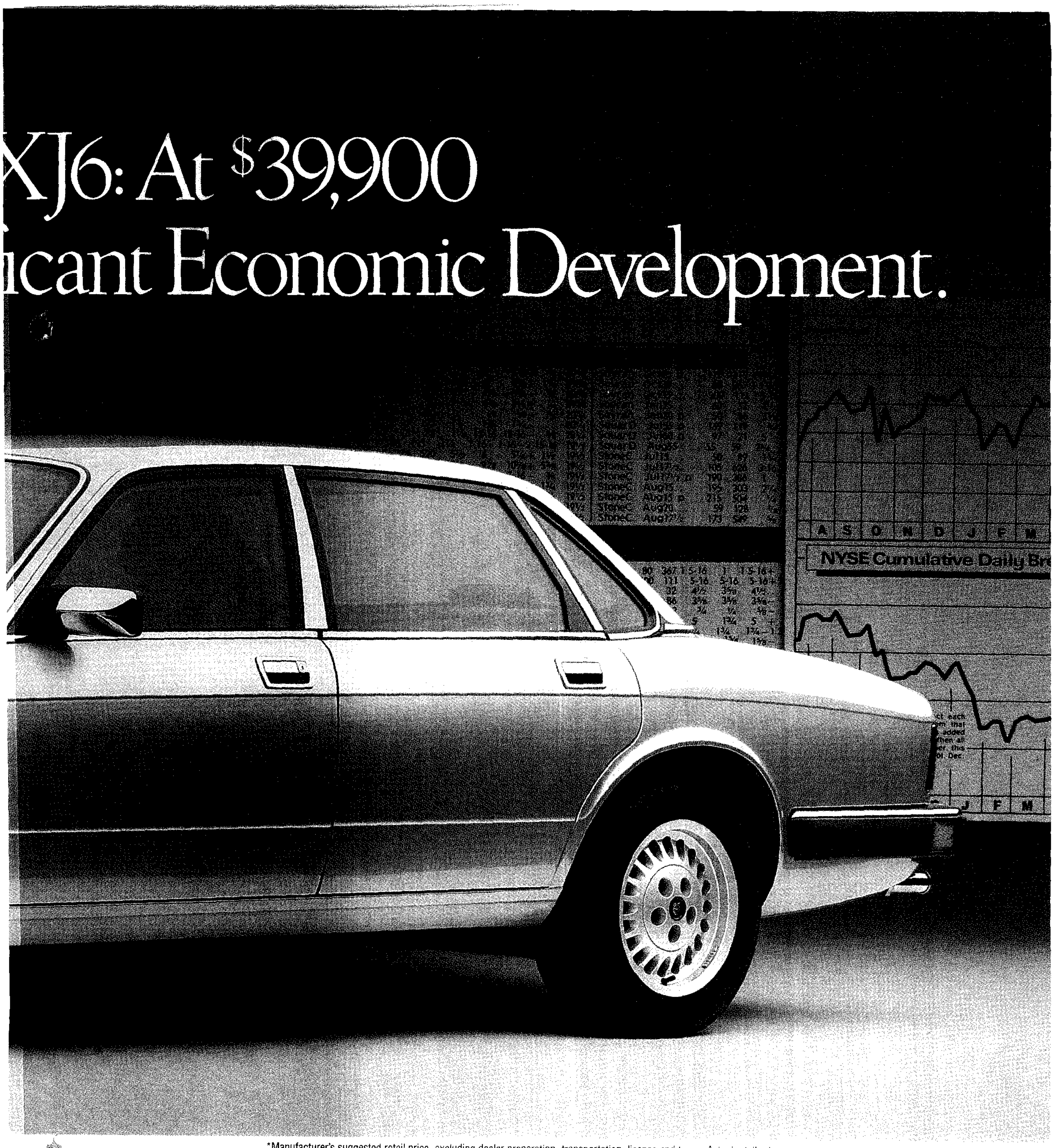

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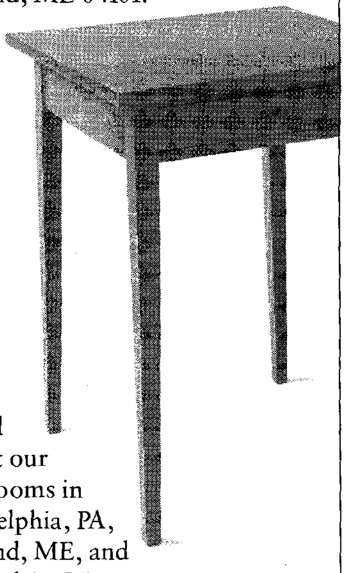

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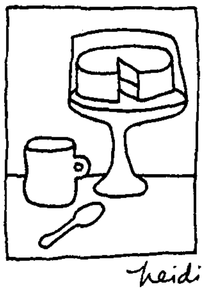
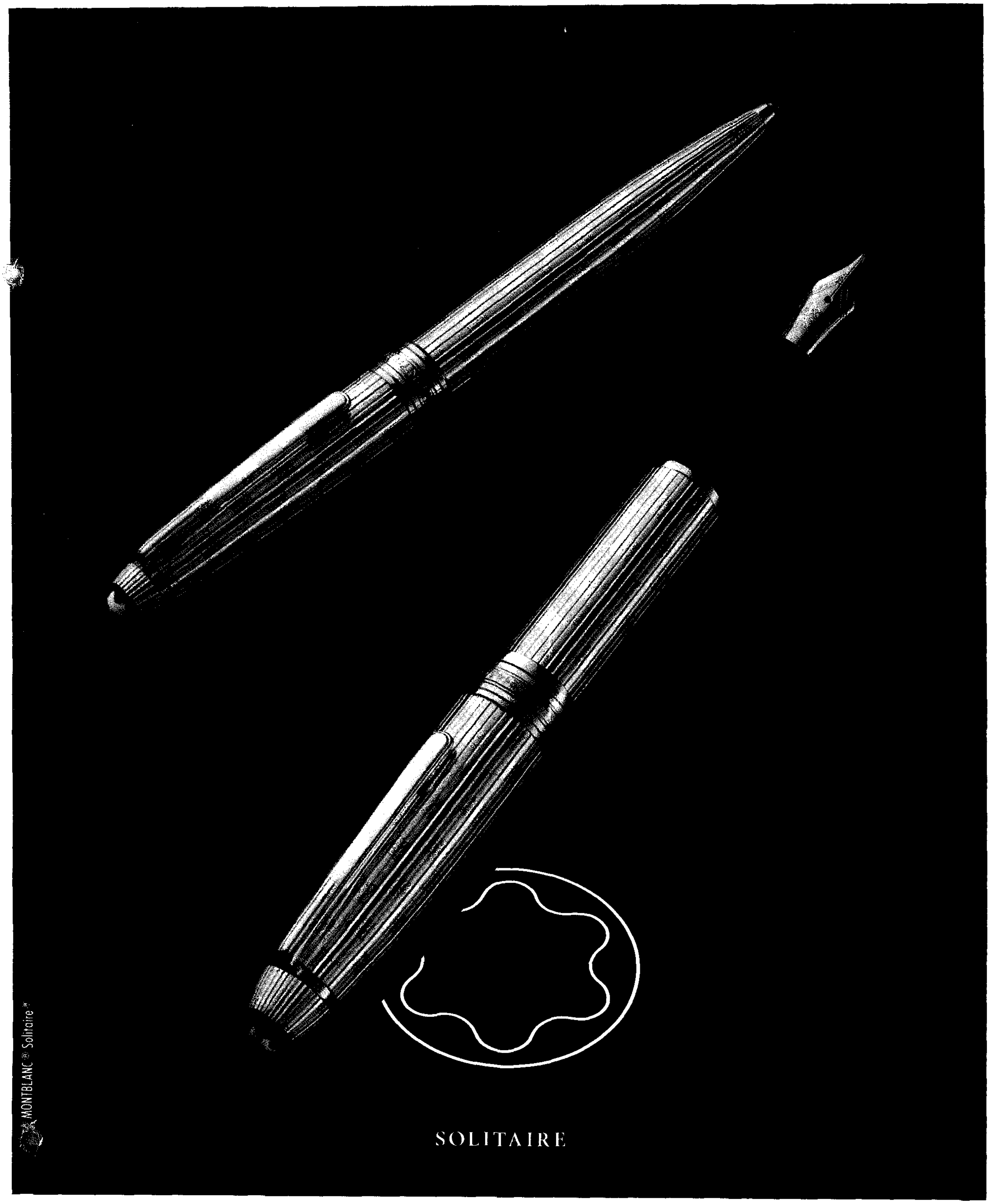
writers for the last twenty years.) "This is admirable, of course, and Škvorecký is a splendid fellow, of course, but it doesn't make him a great writer; it doesn't even make him a 'truer' writer than Kundera."

At the end of the evening, I declined Valenta's courtly offer to walk me back to my hotel. Prague is a small town, easy to find one's way around in. On learning that it was also entirely safe, I had been enjoying solitary walks at night through cobbled streets so empty and silent that one could hear one's footsteps. Tonight, before turning off the Smetana embankment and heading toward my hotel, near Wenceslas Square, I crossed the street and gazed up at Hradčany, the Prague Castle, rising from the far bank of the river like a mystical vision. The castle is actually a collection of medieval and Renaissance structures—palaces, residences, churches, chapels—dominated by St. Vitus' Cathedral, one of the great Gothic cathedrals of Europe, which was now bathed in a delicate blue-green light. The surrounding buildings, which included the Presidential palace, were illuminated by a golden light. Willows and fruit trees about to flower grew on the riverbank, forming the foreground of this ravishing night picture. I stood leaning against the balustrade of the embankment promenade, utterly alone, and feeling the special joy that adventitious aesthetic experience brings. Then my eye fell on a disagreeable sight on the riverbank below me. Glaring whitely out of the darkness was a disorderly pile of papers that someone had left strewn about on the grass. The sight of litter, unpleasing anywhere, is positively arresting in clean, orderly Prague. There is no refuse in Prague's streets, no windblown newspapers, no bottles, no dirty rags, no candy wrappers, no half-eaten pieces of pizza. During my previous visit, hundreds of thousands of people gathered in Wenceslas Square on New Year's Eve to celebrate the beginning of the post-Communist era, and thousands of bottles of champagne were drunk and then either smashed or left standing on the street in merry circles around the trees lining the square and in rows along the edges of the sidewalk. (Wenceslas Square is actually a long, wide boulevard of hotels, shops, cafés, and restaurants, with a statue of the Saint on horseback at its uphill end.) On New Year's Day, between eight in the morning and noon, volunteer bands of citizens gathered in the square with twig brooms, swept up the broken glass, and helped load it and the thousands of bottles into city garbage trucks, so that by noon the square was completely restored to order and no trace remained of the revelry of the night before. As I stared with displeasure at the papers strewn on the riverbank, they underwent a transformation before my eyes and turned into the white feathers of a swan sitting on a nest she had unaccountably chosen to build on the grass just below the promenade. She gleamed out of the darkness, curving her neck and pecking at herself with affected unconcern, aware of me but sitting tight. When I looked up, the cathedral was gone. The blue-green light had been extinguished, and now only the buildings in the foreground were visible; one could make out, if one knew where to look, the faintest trace of the cathedral spires. Then the golden light went out, too, and the whole vision disappeared. I moved on.



A little street off the embankment turned out to lead to the Theatre on the Balustrade, where a performance of Havel's "Largo Desolato" was just letting out. Havel wrote this play—about a dissident leader who is having a nervous breakdown—in 1984, a year and a half after his release from a three-and-a-half-year prison term. It had been circulated in samizdat, and had been produced in Germany and America but never in Czechoslovakia. Havel came to work at the Theatre on the Balustrade as a stagehand in 1960, and soon became one of the shaping forces of its mordant, ironic spirit. It was here that he found his voice as a playwright; while associated with the theatre, he wrote "The Garden Party," "The Memorandum," and "The Increased Difficulty of Concentration," the absurdist plays on which his international reputation was based. The theatre's great period—during which Jarry's "Ubu Roi," Beckett's "Waiting for Godot," Ionesco's one-act plays, and Havel's plays were produced, among others—coincided with the period of liberalization in Czechoslovakia that abruptly ended in August, 1968,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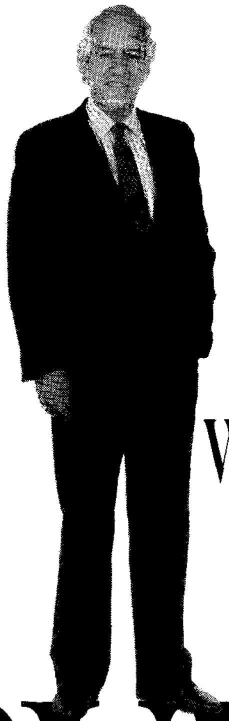
with the arrival of Russian tanks. (Havel left the theatre shortly after the Russian invasion—for nonpolitical reasons, he has reported, though obviously, he further notes, he couldn't have lasted under the new dispensation, given "my various extra-theatrical activities.") In the autobiographical "Disturbing the Peace," a book of essayistic responses to questions sent him in 1985 by Karel Hvížďala, a Czech journalist then living in exile in West Germany, Havel traces the history of the Theatre on the Balustrade and that of other small, avant-garde Prague theatres of the sixties. "Life in Prague was different then," he observes. "Prague had not yet been buried under a landslide of general apathy and turned stiff and corpse-like under its weight. In other words—paradoxically—it made sense to deal with the absurdity of being, because things still mattered." After 1968, the Theatre on the Balustrade, though retaining high standards of production and performance, lost its radical edge, as did every other cultural institution tolerated by the regime.

On the afternoon of December 31, 1989, I had been at a party held in the anteroom of the Theatre on the Balustrade, at which many of the leading writers, artists, academics, and theatre people of Prague were present, including Havel himself. He is a man of chunky build who looks younger than in his pictures and has a most winningly natural manner. He came to the party dressed in dark-gray denim jeans and a dark-blue sweater over a white shirt. He spoke softly, sincerely, easily to the people who approached him, drinking a beer, chain-smoking, gesturing a lot, often breaking into a wonderful smile. In his autobiographical writings (and, indirectly, in his plays) Havel has shown doubt-filled, anguished, neurotic sides of himself, but his public persona is that of a man who is remarkably comfortable with himself and knows how to be simple and direct without ever being glib. "Fortunately, my nature is such that I get on well with everyone," he wrote to his wife, Olga, while he was in detention in a crowded cell in the Prague Ruzyně jail, adding significantly, "And I'm able to suppress my various emotions." In the crowded cell of public life that Havel now inhabits, his gifts of self-control must serve him as well as they served him when he was incarcerated among murderers and thieves.

That New Year's Eve, I got another glimpse of Havel at a glittering party given by the Civic Forum, to which the whole Prague opposition movement and its members in exile had been invited. The atmosphere was something like that of an art opening in SoHo combined with a wedding in Astoria. People sat at long tables in an enormous hall drinking champagne and happily listening to a terrible rock band. Just before midnight, Havel, wearing a suit, appeared on a stage, received an ecstatic ovation, and, in reply to a request for a speech, said good-humoredly, "I must remind you that what we are starting here is a democracy, not a monarchy." At midnight, the national anthem was played, and everyone stood up to sing and to cry. So much communal good feeling is rarely encountered, and on my second visit to Prague I was not encountering it. The city was sinking into what the critic Tzvetan Todorov has called "post-totalitarian depression"—a condition whose pathos was somehow only deepened by the hordes of tourists pouring into it.

I CONTINUED my night walk through small, empty, winding streets and then along Národní Třída, a wide thoroughfare, where I was joined by a few other strollers. I passed the place where on November 17, 1989, the police had savagely beaten peacefully demonstrating students with truncheons—the so-called massacre that roused the traditionally supine Czechs to action. Where Národní Třída approaches Wenceslas Square stands a handsome white six-story Art Nouveau building, which became the headquarters of the Civic Forum soon after its elegant rout of the Communists. (The Civic Forum's original headquarters had been the subterranean Magic Lantern Theatre.) Street musicians had begun to perform in the open plaza in front of the building—under the Communists, street music was forbidden, as was another recently introduced Prague entertainment: *striptýz*—and when I arrived at the plaza an unusually large crowd was gathered around a pair of folk-rock singers, a young man and a young woman singing to the accompaniment of the young man's guitar. However, what had attracted the crowd was not the singing



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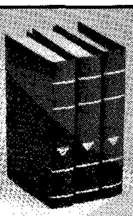
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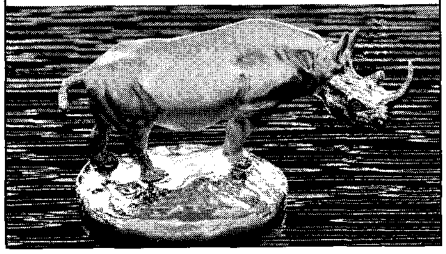


and playing, which were unremarkable, but an oddity: a very old woman, resembling one of the poor deranged creatures one sees wandering about the Upper West Side, had attached herself to the singers and was hopping about after them in a bizarre parody of rock dancing. The crowd laughed in a careless, good-natured way. The cruelty of the spectacle was blunted by the geniality of the performers; the pretty, rose-cheeked girl smiled encouragingly at the old woman and treated her more as a co-performer than as a freakish interloper. Earlier in the day, I had seen a crowd in Wenceslas Square gathered around another curiosity, this one a small demonstration that called itself a Protestní Žranice. ("Pig-Out Protest" is the best I can do.) The protest took the form of a free distribution of food and drink to passersby: anyone who would accept them was handed a huge pallid hunk of boiled chicken wrapped in foil, a piece of bread, a slab of salami, and a beer. What was being protested, I learned from a man biting into his chicken, was the Communist Party's retention of money and property. The protester-distributors were some sort of ad-hoc group, which wasn't running candidates in the coming election but—as my informant described it—"just does things for fun." The Protestní Žranice was evidently a takeoff on the Protestní Hladovka—hunger strike.

Back at the hotel, I turned on the television to one of the two Czech channels, which was showing a film about Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck. (Clara: "Did you write that?" Robert: "Unfortunately no. Heine.") I investigated the other channel, which was broadcasting an interview with a young athlete who had won a prize in Athens ("How did you like Athens, Jiří?" "Very dirty. It's better in pictures"); switched back to Schumann (Mendelssohn: "Have more faith, Schumann"), back to the athlete ("What are your plans for the future, Jiří?" "To go on as before"); and finally alighted on a hazy but riveting "Swan Lake" from the Bolshoi on the Russian channel.

THE next day, a Saturday, I arrived at the Kumermanns' apartment at the appointed hour of five, this time taking a hotel taxi, whose driver, as Kumermann had predicted, found the address with little difficulty. Kumermann's apartment building is entirely without the architectural charm of the buildings in the city proper. It is a nine-story concrete structure of brutal plainness, resembling an American lower-income housing project in its mean, tiled lobby and general punitive air. But Kumermann and Jarmila are satisfied with their living quarters. During the first nine years of their marriage they, and their two small children, lived with Kumermann's mother in a four-room apartment. The housing shortage in Prague is so acute, Jarmila told me, that their name would not have come up on the waiting list for an apartment in their lifetimes, and possibly not even in their children's. Ten years ago, Kumermann joined a building co-op, whose members, with their own hands, constructed their apartments within a prefabricated shell provided by the state. Construction was done after work hours and on weekends, and the project took six years to complete. Besides the living-dining area, the Kumermann apartment has a small entryway, a small kitchen, three bedrooms, and one bathroom. It is a pleasant place, reminiscent of young intellectuals' apartments in New York, filled with bright-covered books in pale-wood bookcases, modern furniture, posters, and photographs. When I came in, Kumermann was, as it happened, washing the living-room windows. "Jarmila has been after me for weeks to do them," he said with a smile. The television was on, and a folk-rock singer was singing a bouncy song called "Když má Čert Splín"—"When the Devil Has Spleen." Kumermann put away his sponge and turned down the sound of the television a little, but didn't turn it off. Jarmila came in from the kitchen to greet me and then went back to preparing dinner.

I asked Kumermann how the Arafat interview had gone. "Terrible," he said. "I was allowed four questions, and the answers he gave were not answers. They were harangues. They were packaged anti-Israel propaganda."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'll write an article about not getting the story." (He is not, I thought to myself, the first inexperienced journalist to think that such a story could be interesting.) "Do you want to hear the tape?" he asked. I said I did, and Kumermann played it. I was interested to hear Kumermann, always so confident and imperturbable with me, sounding cowed and helpless in the face of Arafat's practiced aggressivity.

Perhaps under the influence of this defeat, Kumermann now expressed his worries about his new career. "I'm almost thirty-nine, and I'm starting something I don't know whether I can do or not. Under normal circumstances, I would have tried myself at twenty-five. I would have found out then whether I could write or not. I did a little writing in samizdat, but that doesn't mean anything. In samizdat, there was no competition; everything was accepted. Now there is a great deal of competition." He glanced over at the television screen and added, "At almost thirty-nine, I don't have that much time left."

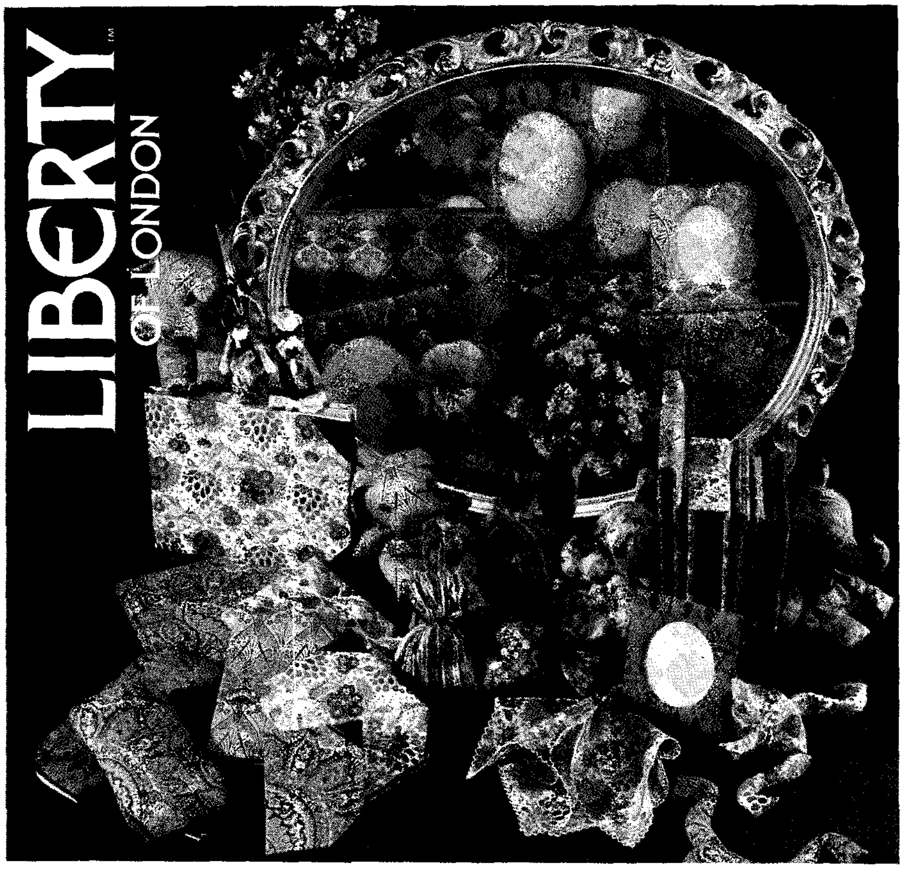
I mentioned Egon Valenta and his feeling that for him the change had come too late. "At sixty-three, he has more reason for concern than you do at thirty-nine," I said.

"No," Kumermann said. "I have more reason. If he is sixty-three, that means that in the nineteen-sixties—during the thaw—he was in his late thirties and therefore already had some experience of real life. Even the people who were kicked out of their professions in '68 and had to do manual work for twenty years—they at least already knew how to do something. But I never had a chance to prove myself. By now, I should either know I can't write or be assured about what I turn out. Thirty-nine is very late to be unsure about your abilities.

"People ten or more years younger than I am are better off, too. For example, the man who is the new editor-in-chief of my magazine: at twenty-eight, he is an experienced and established journalist. Our generation had the experience of '68, whereas his generation—he was seven in '68—grew up without ever having to ask themselves certain ethical questions. As a matter of fact, I just today heard some nasty rumors about this editor-in-chief. I heard that he was a member of the internal Party organization at his former magazine. Last winter, when a petition protesting Havel's imprisonment was being passed around Prague"—Havel was jailed for four months in 1989—"he signed it and in this way evidently made up for his previous 'problems.' "

"What ethical questions do you mean?"

"Well, for example, I happen to know a young editor on another maga-



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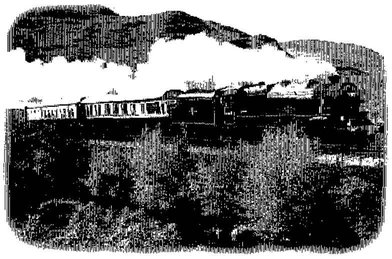

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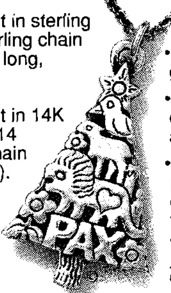

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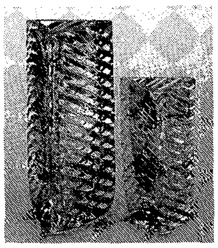

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zine—I've had frequent contacts with him over the years because of a common interest in comics. Under the Communists, he always looked at things very pragmatically. He would say, 'This we can push through, and this we can't.' He would try to get as much space as he could for what he wanted to publish, not caring whom he had to deal with to get it. For me, just the act of dealing with those top swine was unpleasant—almost physically repulsive. But these younger people never felt that very strongly. They thought, All right, Communists are just part of reality—not a very pleasant reality, but something one can make one's peace with. This guy I work for, the young editor-in-chief—I wouldn't hold what I've heard against him as long as our contacts are O.K. But I might feel a bit touchy about it if we got into some kind of conflict over a moral issue. Then I might remember what I've heard."

As Kumermann talked, he was stringing little colored beads on short pieces of wire. He saw me glancing at them, and said, "These are going to be rings. Have you noticed that I'm always toying with something?"

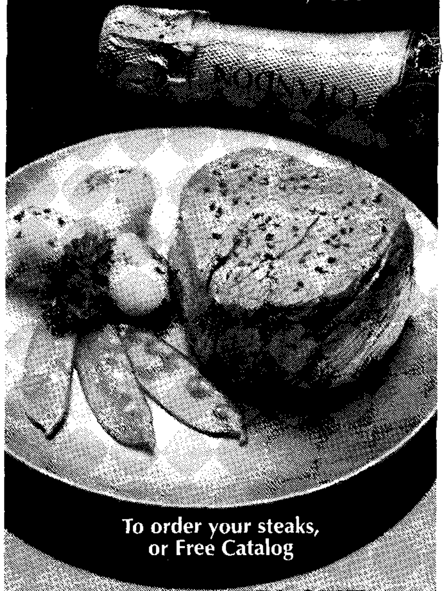
"You never like to be idle?"

"No, I'm just neurotic. I'm always toying with something. If I don't toy with something, I can't concentrate properly. If I'm eating without doing something else—like reading—I get nervous. Maybe it's not healthy, always having to do two things at once. I also do macramé. I usually do it when I listen to the radio or watch TV."

Kumermann worked silently for a few moments and then said, "I've always envied people who have one strong interest. I have a friend, a classmate from school, whose interest in archeology began when he was thirteen. He is now a very important archeologist; archeology has always occupied most of his life. But I've done this, I've done that, and I've never really excelled at anything. I could probably be good at many things, but so far I haven't been excellent at anything. That is how you could describe my life to date, and I wonder if I'm going to end up like this."

"Doing a variety of things can be satisfying," I said.

"No. Not usually. Because it puts you in a position where, in whatever field you work in, there will always be people who are better than you. You are always trailing others. Maybe you



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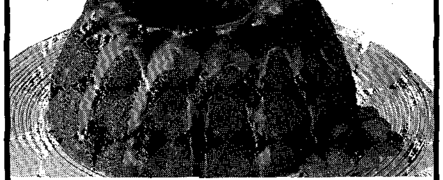

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can say, 'All right, that's nice,' but that's a rationalization."

Kumermann described the old *nomenklatura* system, under which all jobs were controlled by the Communists. "If you were not a member of the Party, there were limits to your career. You could never be head of your department."

"Could you yourself have joined the Party?"

"Sure. When I left the university, I was offered a very nice teaching position at this Communist school in the city—on just one little condition."

"That you join the Party?"

"Yes."

"What would you have taught?"

"Marxist ideology." Kumermann finished his ring and added it to a large cluster of rings strung on a wire. "I'll tell you a nice example of how the *nomenklatura* worked. This archeologist I was just telling you about. Even before he finished school, he was already working for the Academy of Sciences, in the Department of Medieval Archeology. Then, one day, the head of the department retired, and my friend was approached by the head of the Academy's historical section, who said, 'According to *nomenklatura*, the head of the department must be a member of the Party. You are not a member of the Party, so you can't be head of the department. At the same time, it's impossible to have a department without a head. So here are your choices: one, you join the Party and become head of the department or, two, you don't join the Party and we abolish the department, because there is no head, and you lose your job.' It was a very easy choice for him to make. He told me all this when I once asked him if he was a Party member. He felt he had to explain himself, he felt so unhappy and ashamed."

When Kumermann began to describe in detail some risky underground work he had done as a dissident, Jarmila came in from the kitchen and said, "Daniel, you shouldn't tell her this—not when there are Russians still on Czech soil."

Kumermann started to argue with her, then shrugged and said to me, "All right. I don't feel that way, but since Jarmila is nervous just don't go into particulars about this."

Jarmila returned to the kitchen, and Kumermann went on to talk of his desire to travel and of his frustration

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at not having enough money to do so. This was a complaint I heard everywhere in Prague: the Iron Curtain had lifted, but the bars of economic actuality had come down in its place. Everyone was free to go where he pleased, and hardly anyone could afford to go anywhere. (Round-trip airfare to New York from Prague is the equivalent of perhaps ten months of Czech wages; dinner at a medium-priced restaurant in West Germany is the equivalent of two weeks of Czech wages.)

I asked Kumermann why it was important for him to travel.

"Somehow, I just feel it is. In 1969, when I was eighteen, I was in Denmark for six weeks, and then in West Germany for three or four days, and after that, for nineteen years, I went nowhere. In 1988, I was allowed to go to London—they began allowing some of the lesser fry of the Charter signers to travel. One of the greatest inspirations for me was an American student I met twenty years ago at a hostel in Copenhagen. He had been in Vietnam before going back to school. Then he interrupted his studies to spend a year travelling around the world. He had a small backpack with him, and that was all—one change of clothes. He was always washing his things. When a garment fell apart on him, he bought a new one. He had saved up some money, and he had some kind of credit card he could use anywhere. Wherever he went, he always wore the same thing. Americans don't care very much about dressing, right? When people from here go to the West, they take fancy clothes with them. That's something Americans don't care about, right?"

I had learned not to try to disabuse Czechs of the fantastic ideas they held about America. On my first trip, I had spent much time in fruitless argument with them; now I simply nodded when Czechs delivered themselves of their immovable notions about us.

Kumermann went on to tell me about a trip abroad he was actually going to be able to make. The following week, Havel was flying to Israel to accept an honorary degree at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and Kumermann had got a seat on the Presidential plane.

"How did that happen?" I asked.

"I just phoned. I was talking to someone in the President's office, trying to get the interview with Arafat, and I said 'By the way, when Havel goes to Israel would it be possible for me to get on the plane?' and he said 'Yes, we have vacancies.' The only problem is that I have no place to stay in Jerusalem. Neither the government nor the magazine will pay my expenses. The magazine has some money, but they are careful who they give it to, and since I'm a beginner and haven't written anything important yet, they won't give it to me. If I go to Israel and write a good article, maybe my status on the magazine will change. I could write the article right now. I've already spent so much time learning about Israel that I could write a report about it without actually going there."

"You never know," I said. "You might run into some surprises."

"I feel it's the same with America. I've spent so much time learning about America that if I went there it would only be to recognize what I already know. You said you were impressed by my knowledge of colloquial American

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expressions. Well, I also know colloquial American realities. Like, say, at the Harvard Hillel they have a provocation—a sandwich called Blasphemy. Do you know what that is? All right, it's a ham-and-cheese sandwich. I remember these details."

I asked Kumermann if he would be reporting on Havel in Israel, and he said no. His plan was to get on the plane with Havel, and then leave the Havel group at the Lod airport, spend four days in Israel on his own, and rejoin the group to return to Prague. I asked him why the government was giving him what was essentially a free ride to Israel. "There are seats on the plane for journalists" was all he could say in explanation. He had sent express letters to friends in Israel asking if he could stay with them.

Jarmila came in to say that dinner was ready. The children were away for the weekend with their maternal grandmother, who lived in the country. The three of us sat in the dining area and ate an excellent chicken paprika and *knedlíky*, the classic Czech bread dumplings. Jarmila did not speak much at dinner and had a put-upon air. She said she had not been feeling well, had been suffering from insomnia, and would go to bed early. I left right after dinner, aware that I had added to Jarmila's crossness by not finishing everything on my too generously heaped plate.

On Monday, Kumermann and I had another lunch date at the Jewish Town Hall. When we sat down, he asked me, "How much did you know as a child about the Holocaust?"

I said that I had learned about it after the Second World War, though on some level I felt I had always known about it. "What about you?"

"My parents didn't stress it very much. My father was hiding his Jewishness, so he didn't talk about it much. When he died, I found many books on the camps in his library. He had been obsessed with the subject. But as a child I mostly was influenced by the Communist propaganda, which said there were two Germanys—the bad Germany in the West and the good Germany in the East. East Germany had had nothing to do with the war. There had been no Nazis in East Germany. When I was about thirteen, my father got an official letter informing him that his mother had died at Treblinka. I got home before him, and I read the letter—it gave the date and number of the transport—but I didn't know then what it meant. It didn't seem unnatural that someone from our family had died in the war, because the Communists' propaganda always talked about the three hundred and sixty-five thousand Czechs killed in the war. Only, they didn't tell us that three hundred and twenty-five thousand of those people were Jewish. Slowly, the knowledge of the Holocaust crept over me. When I got involved with the Jewish Community, I came to see that I was part of the Holocaust, too—that I had been touched by it through my family. After my father died, I inherited his books about the camps and read some of them. There were books on every major camp—Auschwitz, Treblinka, Dachau, Belsen, Buchenwald—by survivors."

"How did this affect you?"

"Well, I wouldn't say it was a big emotional upheaval. It was more a

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reëvaluation. Also, the more I learned about the Holocaust, the more sensitive I became to any hint of anti-Semitism; I realized that the Holocaust started with small independent islands of anti-Semitism in Germany. But, again, this was more a rational than an emotional reaction. You should realize that my life is based on rational analysis rather than on emotion. If I come to a rational conclusion, it influences my emotional side, more than the other way around. I'm a combination of choleric and theoretical. I don't react quickly. My feelings take a long time to develop, but then they may be stronger than those of people who have an immediate emotional reaction. This is hard on Jarmila, who is a very emotional person. She sometimes hates my logical analysis."

The waitress brought plates of a hearty dish of rice, meat, and vegetables, and as he ate Kumermann morosely told me of a serious hitch that had developed in his trip to Israel. The Israelis, he said, were now insisting that the journalists flying over with Havel participate in all of Havel's activities and stay at his hotel, and demanded an advance payment of twenty-five hundred dollars to cover expenses. (Twenty-five hundred dollars is the equivalent of as much as two and a half years' salary.) *Rudé Právo*, the Communist paper, could conceivably cough up that kind of money, but no other publication could. So Kumermann would have to explore other ways of getting to Israel. One was to apply for a seat on an Army plane that Havel had loaned to the Community to bring members to Israel during his visit; he was afraid, though, that he was applying too late. A second possibility—which made me stare at him in amazement—was to accept an invitation that Arafat had extended to him after the disastrous interview. On finishing his harangue for publication, Arafat had been all friendliness and had invited Kumermann to come to Israel as a guest of the P.L.O. A colleague of Kumermann's had received a similar invitation and had accepted.

"You would really go to Israel as a guest of the P.L.O.?" I asked.

"Why not? I would still write something nasty about them." He looked at his watch and said he had better go talk to the people in the Community about getting on the Army plane. I had an appointment late that afternoon to in-

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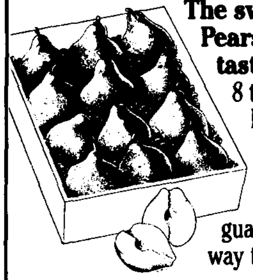

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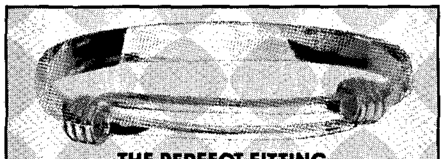

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terview Jarmila at the apartment, and we parted until then.

DURING my first visit to Prague, I spent my days talking with people and my evenings at dinners and parties. I say "talking," but in fact I talked hardly at all; I mostly listened to monologues. One might have thought that after the years of isolation Czechs would be pressing foreign visitors for information about life in the West, but this was not so. Evidently, when people are let out of prison, before they can take in the vast, luminous universe "out there" they must first bear witness to the small, dark world they are leaving behind. In January, the Czechs, still rubbing their eyes in the too bright light, were all Ancient Mariners. By April, the general logorrhea was diminishing, and signs of curiosity about the outer world were beginning to appear, like snowdrops in February.

Perhaps because people now talked less—and also because I was intentionally seeing fewer people—I spent more time alone in Prague. My daily talks with Kumermann formed the structure of my journalistic enterprise. But another agenda also claimed my attention, and sometimes threatened to subvert the journalistic one. This was my quest for the Proustian sensations that would reconnect me to my early childhood in Prague, and illuminate—and possibly settle—the question of what coming to this place meant to me. I had two candidates for the madeleines that would release the flood of memories. One was an ice cream of ambrosial deliciousness I had a memory of eating with my father on the street in Prague. It was an ice cream lighter than American ice cream but milkier than sherbet, whose delicate, fresh, slightly and somehow arousingly commercial taste I have sometimes felt on the verge of—but never succeeded wholly in—encountering again. On Wenceslas Square I had seen strollers with ice-cream cones, and there was something about the appearance of the ice cream that made me think it might be the madeleine ice cream. I bided my time, proleptically savoring the moment when I would walk into a certain shop I had noticed, in front of which there was always a line, and purchase my entrance into the kingdom of early childhood. The second madeleine would be a visit to the third-floor apartment on Vodičkova Ulice where I had

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lived during the first five years of my life with my mother, father, and sister. The apartment was near my hotel, just off Wenceslas Square, in a six-story Art Nouveau building that had a café on the second floor. In January, I had walked into the building and started up the marble staircase, but the way to the third floor was barred by a metal gate, so I had left and not pursued the matter. Now, with more time and will, I had figured out how I could get into the apartment. But, as with the ice cream, I circled it, imagined it, and didn't rush into it.

I had taken to drinking afternoon coffee at the second-floor café, which in my parents' day had been an elegant establishment called Berger's. The café was no longer elegant and bore the generic name Cukrárna—"confectionery." It was dowdy and always crowded, the coffee wasn't good, and the pastries looked unappealing, but it had an agreeable and hospitable spirit. I had been a couple of times to the Café Slavia, on the river across from the National Theatre, but neither its historical resonance as a famous intellectuals' hangout nor its aesthetic majesty (it is a vast room, with great, ornate windows looking out on the river and with a remarkable Symbolist painting at one end) was enough to counteract the tension that pervaded the place. There were too many West German youths with golden-blond punk hair, and American couples with sulky adolescent children, and elderly English librarians with puzzled expressions for the overworked waiters and waitresses to handle with grace, so the handling was done with the subtle sadism common to all places that are wildly successful. At my dowdy Cukrárna, there were few tourists, and the waitresses were efficient and benign. They wore uniforms of a permanently crumpled synthetic lavender fabric, with puffed sleeves and little white aprons, which were of a piece with the general gratuitous unattractiveness of the décor. On my first visit, I had sat at a table where two men were finishing their coffee (table sharing was customary at the Cukrárna), and one of them was studying his bill with indignation. "Seven crowns," he said. "Last week, it was six." When a young waitress came to clear the cups, the man said to her, "Seven crowns, and they don't even give you water with the coffee." The waitress said nothing and walked away with the cups. But presently an older waitress appeared and said to the man, "So what's this about water?" He repeated, "Now they don't even give you water with the coffee." The waitress said, "When we served water, decent people would complain that it smelled." Then she went and got the man a glass of water.

GIVEAWAY

I.

In the desert
dryness promotes the formation
of flower buds. This is not aesthetics
but survival.

In the cancer ward, we laugh.
Solemnly attentive as a deacon
at Mass, a nurse prepares an enema.

Serena tells stories: Mrs. Long-Nose,
a childhood invention,
who moved by farting
in her voluminous skirts. The nurse laughs, too.

II.

There is flame
in the bud,
gold center
of each opening.
Sometimes we see it,
when blooms are spent.

For three nights I have been sleeping
in Serena's star quilt,
wrapped in a daughter's song of needle and thread,
a song the color of parched grass.

III.

Joy at the heart of things:
Serena in the home, sightless at last,
asks to sit by the window
so she can watch the moon rise.

Serena with her daughter,
spending the last money
on bingo, and blankets for the funeral giveaway.

"Did you have fun?" a nurse asked.
"As much fun as you can have," Serena replied,
"playing bingo when you're blind."

—KATHLEEN NORRIS

• •

On another visit to the Cukrárna, I got into conversation with a middle-aged man and woman at my table; he was a factory worker, and she was a telephone operator. They were not married—they were out on a date—and were a little skittish with each other. When the waitress came, they ordered white wine and did not rule out the possibility of a pastry later. In answer to my question about how they were getting along in the new ord[illegible], the woman, who looked a little like Jana Valenta, said, "Life will probably be better for our children, but not for us. Things will probably get worse before they get better. But we love our President. Some people who are against him talk about how he speaks oddly—how he does something with his tongue, like a lisp. It's because they beat him up when he was in prison and damaged the roof of his mouth. That's why he speaks this way." (Havel has

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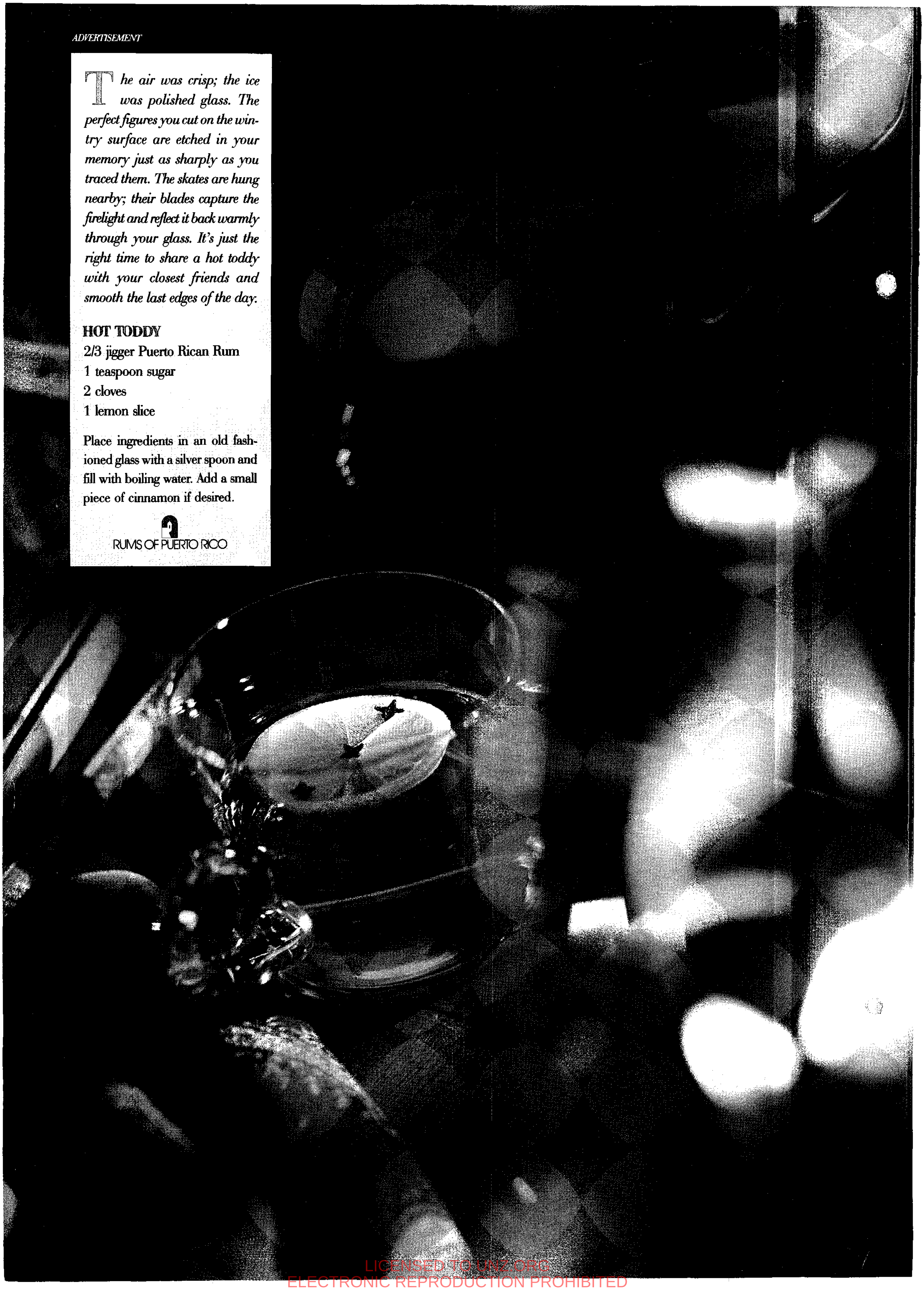
1 fifth gold Puerto Rican Rum
12 egg yolks
1/2 pound sugar
1 quart milk
1 quart heavy cream
(or use your favorite eggnog mix)

Beat the egg yolks until light, then beat in sugar until the mixture is thick. Stir in milk and rum. Chill for three hours, then pour into punch bowl and fold in stiffly whipped heavy cream. Chill for one hour, then dust with nutmeg before serving. Serves twenty-four.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARLES PURVIS



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2/3 jigger Puerto Rican Rum
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2 cloves
1 lemon slice

Place ingredients in an old fashioned glass with a silver spoon and fill with boiling water. Add a small piece of cinnamon if desired.

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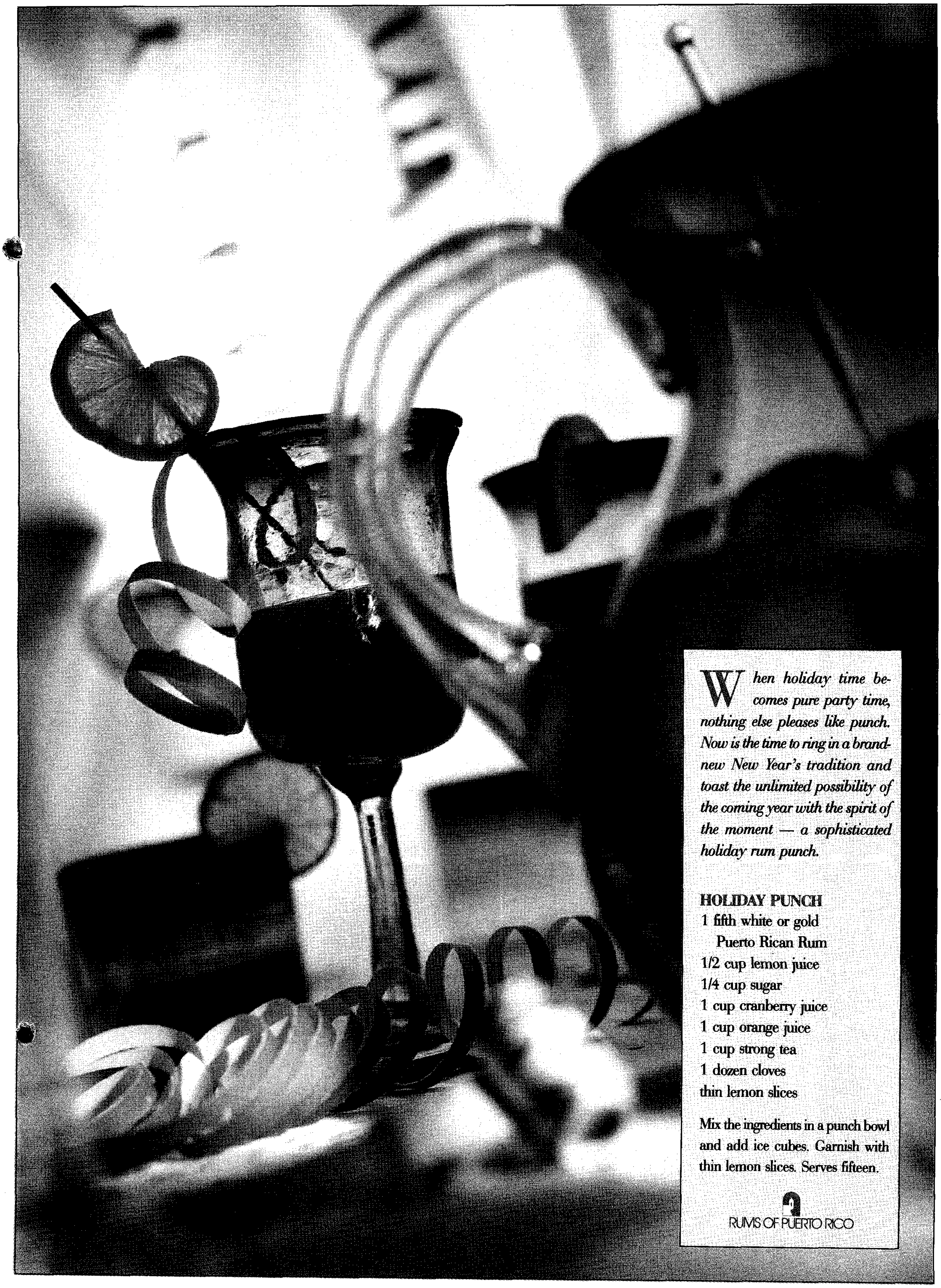

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Puerto Rican Rum
1/2 cup lemon juice
1/4 cup sugar
1 cup cranberry juice
1 cup orange juice
1 cup strong tea
1 dozen cloves
thin lemon slices

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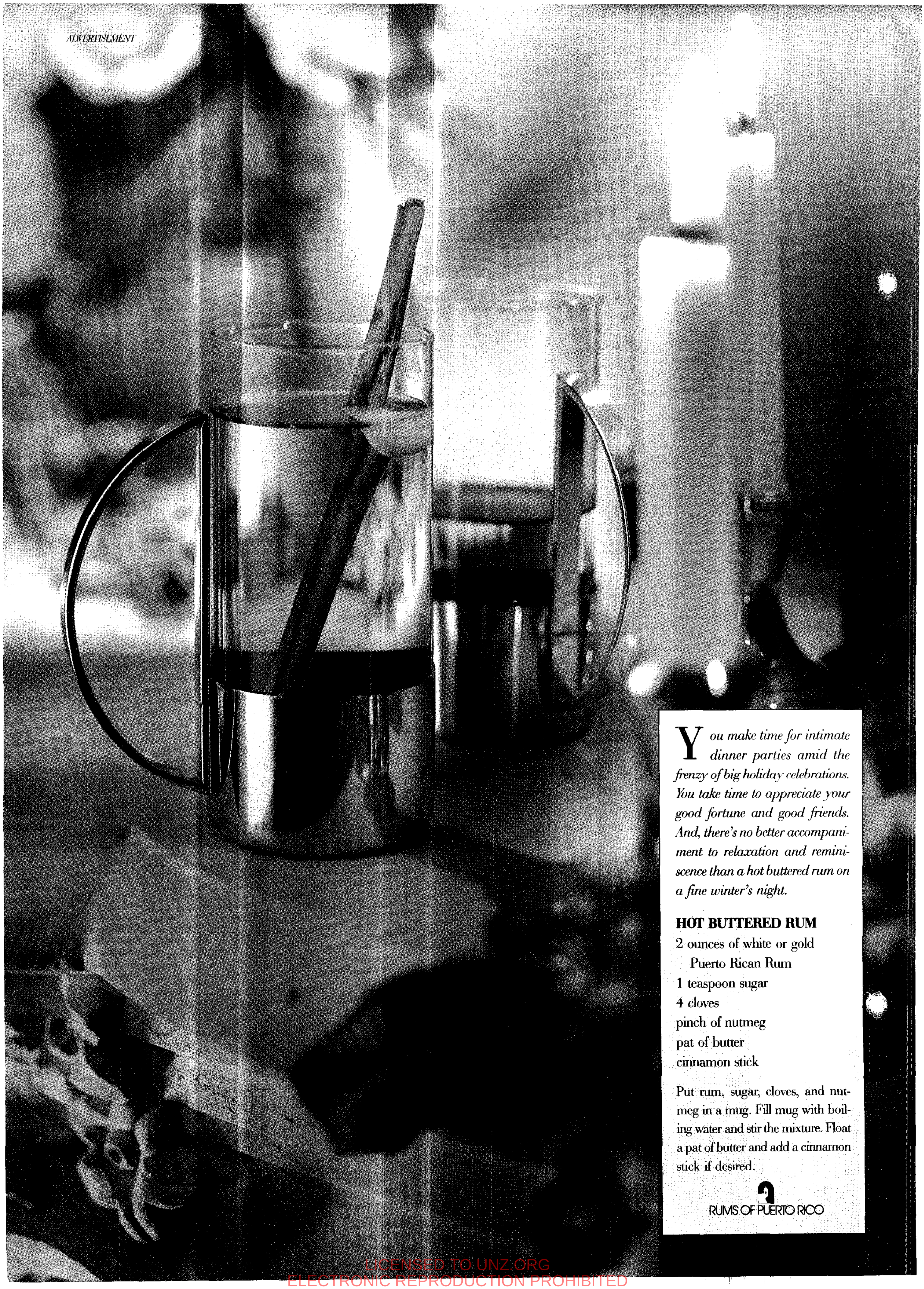

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HOT BUTTERED RUM

2 ounces of white or gold
Puerto Rican Rum
1 teaspoon sugar
4 cloves
pinch of nutmeg
pat of butter
cinnamon stick

Put rum, sugar, cloves, and nutmeg in a mug. Fill mug with boiling water and stir the mixture. Float a pat of butter and add a cinnamon stick if desired.

RUMS OF PUERTO RICO

never written about being beaten in prison, nor does he speak with a lisp.)

I said provocatively, "We read in the newspapers in America that people in the former Communist countries don't know how to work."

Both the man and the woman chimed in to protest that this wasn't so. "We know how to work," the man said, "and we work very hard—those of us on the bottom. It's the people above us, the ones who do the paperwork, who don't work. That's why there is chaos." The woman said that at her previous job, at a dress factory, "we were worked so hard, they stood over us so much, that we couldn't even go to the toilet. If you went to the toilet and there was someone ahead of you, you had to go back to your place. They wouldn't give you the time to wait." The man said, "Much of what is made in the factory is defective"—as if no human agency were involved.

As he spoke, I recalled a passage in Havel's essay "The Power of the Powerless" that had made a strong impression on me. In 1974, after his plays were banned, Havel had worked in a brewery, and his immediate superior was

> a certain Š, a person well versed in the art of making beer. He was proud of his profession, and he wanted our brewery to brew good beer. He spent almost all his time at work, continually thinking up improvements, and he frequently made the rest of us feel uncomfortable because he assumed that we loved brewing as much as he did. In the midst of the slovenly indifference to work that socialism encourages, a more constructive worker would be difficult to imagine.

Havel goes on to tell the melancholy history of Š's quixotic attempts to rescue the brewery from the ruin it was being brought to by its incompetent manager, and about his final, desperate act of writing a letter to the manager's superior, "in which he attempted to analyze the brewery's difficulties [and] explained why it was the worst in the district and pointed to those responsible." But the manager had friends in high places and was able to get Š's letter labelled a "defamatory document" and Š himself a "political saboteur." Š was transferred to another brewery, where he was given work that required no skill. Havel writes:

> By speaking the truth, Š had stepped out of line, broken the rules, cast himself out, and he ended up as a sub-citizen, stigmatized as an enemy. He could now say anything he wanted, but he could never, as a matter of principle, expect to be heard. He had become the "dissident" of the Eastern Bohemian Brewery.
>
> I think this is a model case.... You do not become a "dissident" just because you decide one day to take up this most unusual career. You are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility combined with a complex set of external circumstances.... It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of society.

But here, as in all his writings, Havel allows for the complexity and diversity of human experience even under totalitarianism. He writes:

> I am far from believing that the only decent and responsible people are those who find themselves at odds with the existing social and political structures. After all, the brewmaster Š might have won his battle.... The manager, who was politically powerful but otherwise ignorant of beer, a man who loathed workers and was given to intrigue, might have been replaced, and conditions in the brewery might have been improved on the basis of Š's suggestions.

The Cukrárna was evidently a place where some Š had prevailed and set its agreeable tone and calmly efficient praxis. The older waitress's solicitude for the complaining customer reflected a fundamental decency and responsibility. Doubtless there were other workplaces where the better parts of human nature had prevailed over the worse ones even though the system was weighted toward the latter.

One day, I bought the ice-cream cone and had a tour of the old apartment; of course, neither experience was significant. The ice cream was simply bad European ice cream, and on entering the apartment I felt not a shock but merely a small stir of recognition. Yes, this is where the dining room was, here was the kitchen, that room at the end of the hall was the nursery. In the thirties, the place had been a standard bourgeois Prague apartment. Now it was a suite of offices belonging to an enterprise called the Prague Confectionery & Soda Company. Its director, a Mr. Švehla, took me around with a mildly resentful air; he didn't like the idea that all these rooms had been occupied by a single family. Although linoleum now covered the parquet floors, and one of the large rooms facing the street had been divided, the apartment was essentially intact, with its ornate ceiling moldings, and its tall windows looking out on Vodičkova

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Ulice. But it evoked no memories. There was one room the director did not show me. It was next to the kitchen, on the side of the apartment facing an alley. Its door was locked, and it contained the office safe. The safes of childhood memory are similarly protected. One cannot get into them at will; one cannot pick their locks. One can only hope for an accident that leaves the door carelessly open for a few minutes, allowing one to slip in before the director is recalled to his duties.

MY interview with Jarmila began badly. I had brought a present—some pansy plants in soil, which I had bought at a small farmers' market near the Old Town Square—and it created a problem: where and how to keep them until the weekend, when they would be taken to the family's plot in an allotment garden in an outlying district. Kumermann, who, like Jarmila, had come home from work a few minutes earlier, looked at the plants balefully and then said there was a pail on the balcony outside the living room where they could be kept. Jarmila went to the balcony, suddenly shrieked, and reappeared clutching her hand, in a fury at her son David, who had evidently left an open bottle of acid from his chemistry set on the balcony; she had knocked it over and spilled it on her hand. "This is the last straw," Jarmila said. "I've had it up to here with that boy's experiments." She went to wash her hand, and Kumermann called David from the bedroom. The boy, a shy, dark fifteen-year-old, appeared and said that the bottle had contained peroxide, not acid. When Jarmila learned this, she was slightly mollified. The boy returned to his bedroom, and Kumermann went to the kitchen. Jarmila sank into an armchair, and we began the interview. Until now, Jarmila and I had always spoken Czech together—not because her English wasn't good (it was even better than Kumermann's: she was an English teacher by profession) but out of some shared instinctive feeling that Czech was the language of choice for our woman-to-woman rapport. Now, so I wouldn't have to translate when I wrote, we changed to English.

Jarmila said she was still exhausted and ill. She was still suffering from insomnia, and over the last several months had been running a low-grade fever, for which no cause had been found. She said she had asked Kumermann to do the shopping and to cook dinner that day. I asked whether perhaps I shouldn't come back another time.

"No, it's O.K. I can talk."

"Could it be something in the water?" I asked.

"No. No bacteria could survive in our water—it's so full of chlorine and other chemicals." She went on to speak of the neglect she felt to be inherent in the Czech medical system. The overworked clinic doctors, she believed, couldn't give her proper care.

"Are most Czech doctors women, as in Russia?" I asked.

"Yes."

"And does the medical profession here have the same low status it has in Russia?"

"It's a bit different here—different from the high status and money of America, but also different from Russia. Here the doctor gets a low salary—either the same as an ordinary worker or slightly lower, though a specialist may get a bit more. The average monthly salary of a doctor is between three thousand and thirty-five hundred crowns. Specialists may get four, five, or six thousand. But the social status of doctors is very high. People look up to them; everyone wants the doctor to be his friend. The fact is, very often you have to give the doctor a bribe. We have a special word for it, *všimné*—it's the thing that makes the doctor notice you. People put the money in an envelope and give it to the doctor, and she just pockets it."

"Do you do it as you come in or as you are leaving?"

"You do it as you are leaving. I never do it. That is probably why I am so neglected. But other people do it. They say that if you need an operation you have to do it."

"So this is the way doctors raise their incomes above the level of the worker."

"Yes. Some doctors make more than others. Gynecologists and obstetricians, for instance, make a lot of money. It is always better to pay the bribe and be sure that your child will be born safely."

"You paid the *všimné* when your children were born?"

"Yes. I paid a thousand crowns for each child, and I have never regretted it. Because the doctor did more than she would have done otherwise. For example, when I was taken to the hospital

Daniel called the doctor, and she came to see me immediately, which was wonderful. Otherwise, I would have been left there without any help."

As we talked, Jarmila's spirits seemed to revive, and during a discussion of Prague sexual mores she became quite animated. In Prague, she told me, there were very few open homosexuals. She said that she herself knew only two gay men, and one of them lived in Finland. She added, "I've never heard of a lesbian in this country. We know what they are, but I've never met one."

I said that in America during the sixties lesbianism had become a political gesture among feminists (as well as an agreeable alternative for women fed up with men), and was now fairly commonplace, although not entirely without social stigma.

"That won't happen here," Jarmila said. "Not for a long time. Because we still need our men. We simply can't live without them. We still need their salaries. Here, if you don't put two salaries together the family cannot exist."

I said, "What about two working women living together?"

Jarmila looked at me in bewilderment. "Two women? Two women living together? You mean women without children." She let the idea sink in and said, "Yes, that might be possible. But where would they live? We have a housing problem here. If you are single, it's extremely difficult to get a flat. You can't buy one, and you can't rent one through the state, so you usually live with your parents. So two women living together—that would be very rare."

I mentioned a lesbian couple I knew in New York who lived with the two children of one of the women from her prior marriage.

Jarmila again looked bewildered. "But how can the children cope with it? I can't imagine it. If I kicked out Daniel—and one day I will, probably, when I find the right woman—I just can't imagine how David and Miša would react to that. They would probably kick *me* out."

Daniel came in from the kitchen, where he could overhear our conversation. "Do you think you could find a woman who would put up with you?" he said.

"I could find many. All my women friends would be very glad to live with me. Well! Two women living together . . ." Jarmila stretched out in her

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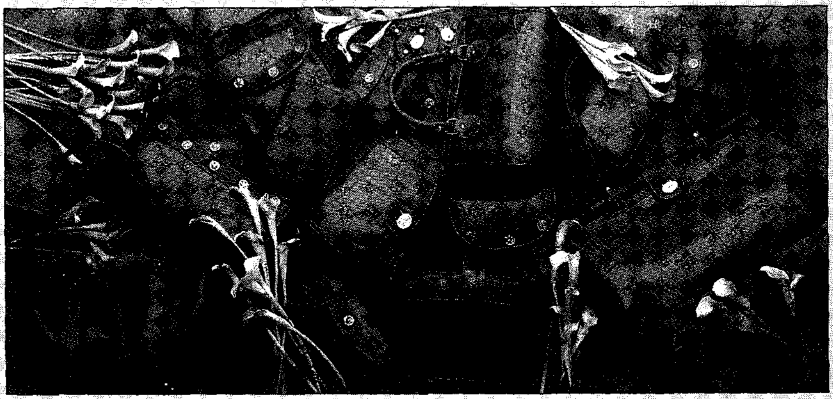

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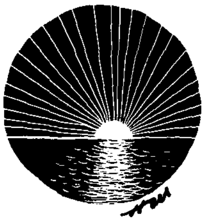
chair and luxuriated in the idea. "Two women. It would be wonderful." Daniel picked up some papers from a desk and went into his bedroom. Jarmila continued, "But what about two men living together? Men are so lazy. They come home at night and sit down and pick up a newspaper or a book, or they watch television, or, if they have a car, they say, 'I must go have a look at the car,' and they lie under the car and have a little rest. Or they go to a pub. And the poor woman comes home from work and has to do the shopping and the cleaning and help the children with their homework and cook the dinner. She does everything. In my previous job, at a language school, I had to teach two evenings a week, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays I got home at eight-thirty. I thought it was terrible. Now I have a job where I come home every day at five o'clock. But, of course, it means that I have to cook the dinner every day, seven days a week. When I was at the language school, Daniel somehow took it as his duty to cook the dinner on Tuesdays and Thursdays, because there was no one else. But now he wouldn't think of doing it."



I ventured, "Maybe you could ask him to help you."

"No, I can't now. I started my new job in February, but for me it's not so new, since it's another teaching job. But Daniel started his new job this month, and for him everything is new. So I just can't ask him now. Last Tuesday, I got up at half past five and found him sitting at the desk here, *sleeping*. He had sat here the whole night. He has to work very hard, and it's important for him to succeed in his job. I've been teaching such a long time that I wouldn't mind being a window-washer now. But he was a window-washer for twelve years. It's a long time. He deserves something better."

"That's very nice of you—" I began.

Jarmila interrupted. "No, I'm not only being nice. I'm also fed up with having a husband who is a window-washer and doesn't wash his own windows. Well, actually, he did wash the windows last Saturday. When he gets used to his job—if he ever does, and I'm not sure he ever will—then, of course, I can ask him to do more. But even when he was a window-washer he did other things, so as not to go crazy. He read books and wrote articles and studied. He couldn't do any of this in the afternoon, after work, because the children were home then and were always asking him questions or wanting to do something with him. He did it all at night. He was also doing some work for Charter, all of which took a lot of time. When the revolution came, I thought, Now he will have regular hours and he will come home earlier. But he didn't. During the revolution, he started coming home at two in the morning, and even later. Sometimes he didn't come home at all. Very often, I complained, and other women complained. The men went everywhere; they knew what was happening, and we didn't. They had no time to talk to us and tell us what was going on. Several times, I went alone to Wenceslas Square to take part in the big rallies—completely alone. I didn't like it. I'm scared of crowds. There were two hundred thousand people there."

Kumermann reappeared, and he and Jarmila had a brief, testy exchange. He told her he had to return to the office and would be back home at eight-thirty. He said he would bring back fried cheese for dinner, and directed her to put the heat on under the potatoes at eight. She said sullenly that she didn't see how he could take the tram and the metro to his office and back and buy the cheese and still be home at eight-thirty. He shrugged and left.

"So you see. This is how it is almost every day. He simply announces he has to go somewhere, and he goes. Now he's leaving again. He said he was going to cook dinner, and he's not going to cook it. He says he will be back at half past eight. We will see whether he is back at half past eight."

I asked Jarmila whether she and Kumermann had been in accord about his signing the Charter. She replied, "Yes. We decided it jointly, and decided that only one of us should sign it, and that I wouldn't sign it. Daniel's mother was no good at looking after the children, and my parents lived in the country. We knew that if we were both taken away there would be no one to look after the children. So we decided that one was enough in our case." She went on to speak of her terror when the police would come early in the morning and take Kumermann away for interrogation. "He would come back very hungry, because he never ate anything in the prison."

"Was he afraid the food would be poisoned?"

"No. He was afraid it wouldn't be kosher."

"Does he eat only kosher food?"

"He sort of does and doesn't."

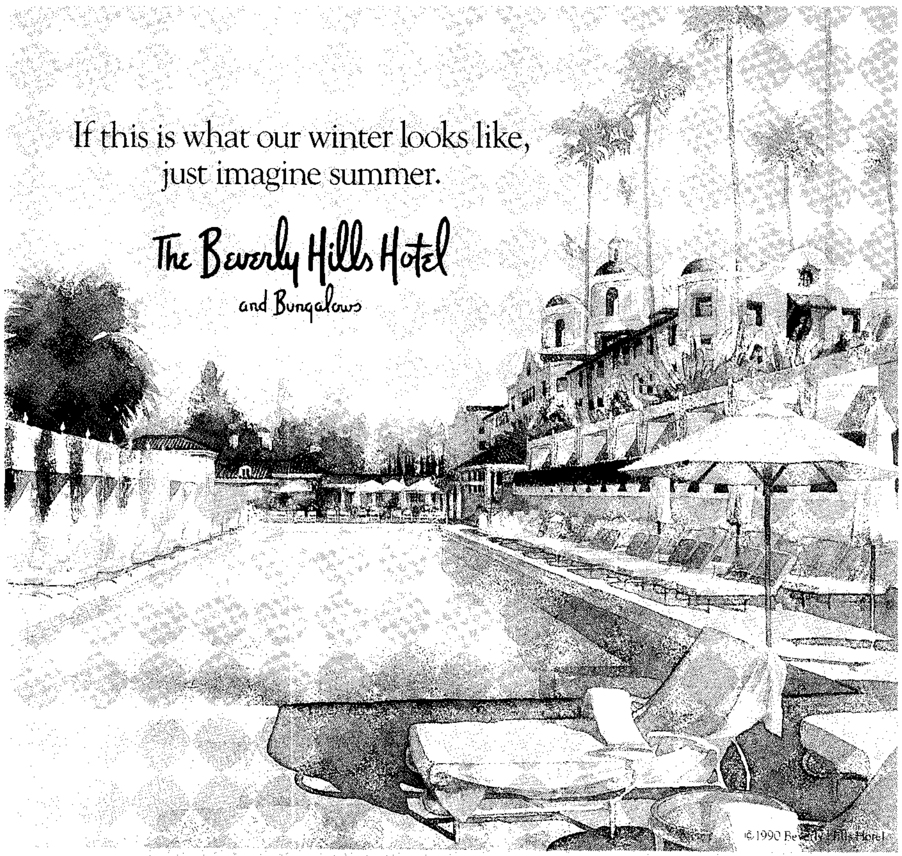
"Do you cook kosher food?"

"No. I don't know how to. But it's true, I don't use pork or ham."

Jarmila spoke of her teaching with confident satisfaction. "No one has ever fallen asleep in my class," she said. "When I left my previous job, the pupils were unhappy. I hadn't expected that. Czech students are not very lively. They just sit there and look at you. They listen, and they don't react. They laugh sometimes. I believe in laughter. If a lesson is quiet, if the pupils don't laugh at least five times, it's a waste of time. When they laugh they are learning, and when they don't laugh they are bored and not learning. But sometimes it is so difficult to wake them up and make them laugh."

At eight o'clock, I followed Jarmila into the kitchen. There was a pan on the stove in which neatly peeled and quartered potatoes sat covered in water; a handful of caraway seeds floated on the surface. "Well, he prepared the potatoes," Jarmila said grudgingly. She turned the gas on under the potatoes. At half past eight, she drained the potatoes and returned to the living room with a martyred air; then Kumermann came in, a few minutes later. He went into the kitchen, briskly prepared the fried cheese, sliced a couple of cucumbers, and called the children. Although the family usually ate together, Kumermann had thoughtfully decided to spare the shy children the ordeal of eating with a stranger from America, and fed them first; when they finished, they did their homework in the living room. The fried cheese was one of the best things I have ever eaten: slabs of a mild cheese coated with bread crumbs and egg, as if it were Wiener schnitzel, and lightly fried in oil. It was sold already breaded.

After dinner, Kumermann showed me his gum-wrapper collection. He brought out an album in which five hundred or so of his specimens were pasted, and a tea tin containing other examples of his twelve thousand wrappers. The album was an illumina-



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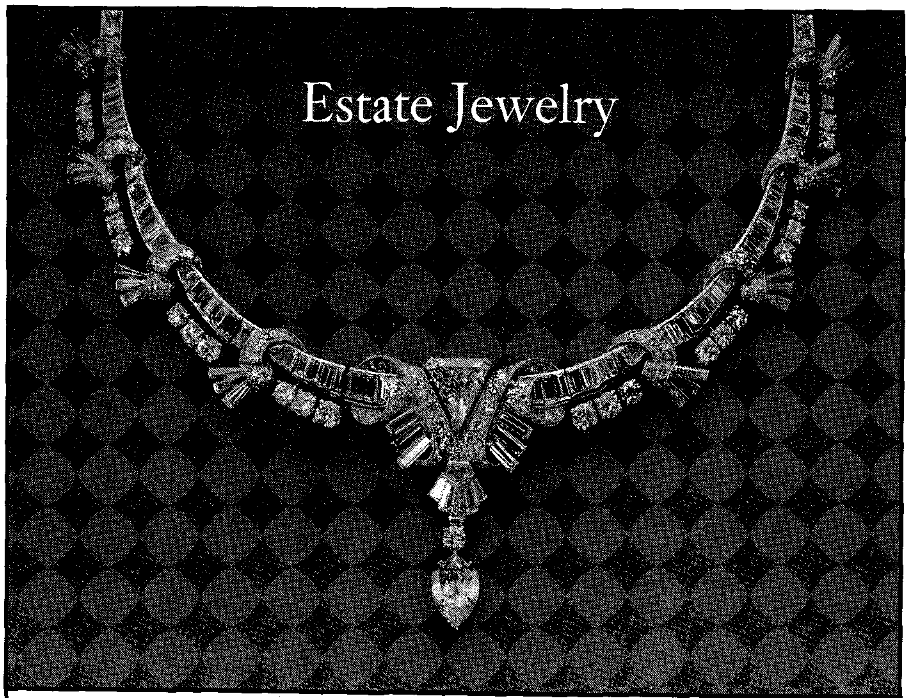

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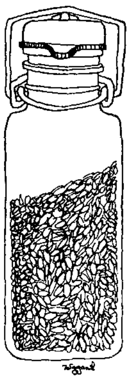
tion. All my previous associations with gum wrappers had been unpleasant: the ugly sight of a chewing mouth, wads of gum stuck on soles of shoes or the bottoms of wastebaskets, crumpled-up wrappers on the floor of a car. Now I saw what a treasure of design lay embedded in Kumermann's collection. The variety of colors, typefaces, patterns, and illustrations changed my feeling of revulsion into one of delight. There were wrappers from India, Thailand, Egypt, Spain, Italy, France, Holland, Poland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Romania, England, Scotland, Finland—seemingly from everywhere in the world. The carefully smoothed little paper rectangles were pasted on the pages in orderly rows, forming meta-patterns that evoked the collages of Kurt Schwitters. Here, too, the unregarded flotsam and jetsam of commercial culture had been plucked out of their context and carried into the realm of the treasured. Walter Benjamin, in the most cited passage of his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," speaks of the "aura" that distinguishes the unique art object from the mechanically made multiple. But a collection such as Kumermann's, like art in which mechanically reproduced images and patterns and texts figure, precisely invests the multiple with aura. In the context of its twelve thousand companion pieces, each gum wrapper acquired presence and aesthetic status. As I leafed through the album, I idly asked Kumermann if he had any Russian gum wrappers; he promptly delved into the tin and produced a pile of about fifty. The piles—neat and precise—had a charm of their own, though the album represented a higher stage of the wrappers' evolution from their humble origins on the world's candy counters.

Kumermann spoke of his long collecting career. "As far as I can remember, I always collected. When I was four, I had a collection of various pictures, and then, at eight, I started collecting matchboxes; in three years, I had several thousand. I gave up matchboxes for stamps, and by thirteen I had several thousand of them. I don't throw anything away, because I know somebody may be collecting it. For certain things I have regular customers: I have a customer for everything relating to chocolate; he is a friend who has some fifty-five thousand chocolate-related items. Another friend collects bottle caps. A collector is best understood by another collector. There was this man in the office of one of the companies whose windows I washed who made regular trips to Egypt, and sometimes I succeeded in squeezing something out of him, because he had two small daughters to whom he brought Egyptian gum. A woman clerical worker who sat next to him in the office would listen to my conversations with him, and one day she said to me, 'Give me advice on how to collect.' She was a recent widow and wanted to fill her time with something. I told her, 'It's no use. If you have to decide to be a collector, you'll never be one.' There are collectors and there are gatherers, and the difference between the two is that a collector collects even things he doesn't like, whereas a gatherer collects only things he likes. A collector will collect things he finds aesthetically distasteful, just for the sake of completeness."

I got back to my hotel at around eleven, and then set out on what had become a nightly walk to the river. When I reached the riverbank, I found the nesting swan in a state of agitation. Her neck was craning from side to side, and her wings were thrashing about heavily. Something was moving in the grass, and when I saw what it was my heart froze. Three rats were scurrying around the nest, sometimes making audacious forays into its outer edge, which the swan would fend off with her bill and her wings. One particularly bold rat caused her to half lift herself off the nest—revealing the eggs—as she hissed and beat her wings. He scuttled away to a safe distance, but was soon back. I watched, anxious and upset, as the rats kept approaching the nest, and the swan—as if tethered to it—craned and hissed and thrashed about. I was glad when another stroller joined me at the balustrade, and we watched the scene together, sharing its pathos and horror. Tonight, for some reason, the mystical blue-green light of the cathedral was still on at eleven-thirty. My companion left, and I soon made my way back to the hotel. I woke up several times that night and thought of the swan with dread and pity.

THE next day at noon, I picked up Kumermann, as usual, at his office, but when we arrived at the Jewish Town Hall we found the lunchroom closed, with no explanation; there was simply a sign saying "LUNCHROOM CLOSED." We went to a local self-service grocery store and bought rolls for Kumermann and a yogurt for me, and walked over to a nearby square to eat our lunch on a bench. We could not find a seat, however. In addition to the usual Easter-holiday crowds, and the unusual post-velvet-revolution foreign journalists, businessmen, and curiosity-seekers, there were the tourists who had been drawn to the city by the impending visit of the Pope—the first papal visit ever. On Saturday, he was to appear at the Letná Plain, which could accommodate over a million people, and was where the Communists had held their May Day parades. Kumermann proposed that we find somewhere to sit in nearby Charles University, and we walked over to an entrance a couple of blocks away. Kumermann led me with familiarity up a marble staircase and down a long corridor to a stone bench beneath a stately window, and we ate our lunch there. As faculty members went by, Kumermann would greet them, pointing out to me several former dissidents who had been kicked out after '68 and had been recently reinstated. One of the faculty members walking by—whom Kumermann did not know and to whom I did not make myself known—was Egon Valenta; he was accompanied by a small woman of around thirty, wearing a miniskirt and black tights, who was tossing a mane of prematurely gray hair and laughing up into his face in an intimate and proprietary manner. I was sure he had seen me, and I felt obscurely at fault, as one always does when these unwelcome encounters occur.



I said to Kumermann, "I have been reading Kafka's 'Letters to Milena,' and this morning I came across a sentence where Kafka says that Czech is a more 'affectionate' language than German. It made me think about our talks and about the fact that we always speak English together. I probably have a different picture of you from the one I would have if we spoke Czech. Do you have the feeling that you are a different person in each of the languages?"

Kumermann considered. "Well, there are more precise emotional levels in Czech than in English, and various kinds of diminutives. Where in English there is only a single, rather primitive diminutive form of a word, in Czech there are several. That's about the difference."

"I feel there's more of a difference than that between the two languages. For instance, people with whom I have spoken in both Czech and English seem more playful in Czech."

"Yes, you can toy with Czech more than with English. And you can blur the boundaries of like and dislike, so as not to offend."

"You strike me as a very forthright person, who says what he thinks and never holds back. Do you seem less so in Czech?"

"No. In Czech I am the same. But I might put things in fancier, funnier words."

"I feel—and I've been allowing for it—that in English you're a much more gruff and plain-speaking person than you would be in Czech."

"I offend everyone around here, too."

I laughed. "So it wouldn't be doing you an injustice to describe you as a straightforward and no-nonsense type—as opposed, say, to your colleague the charmer, with his suavity and politesse?"

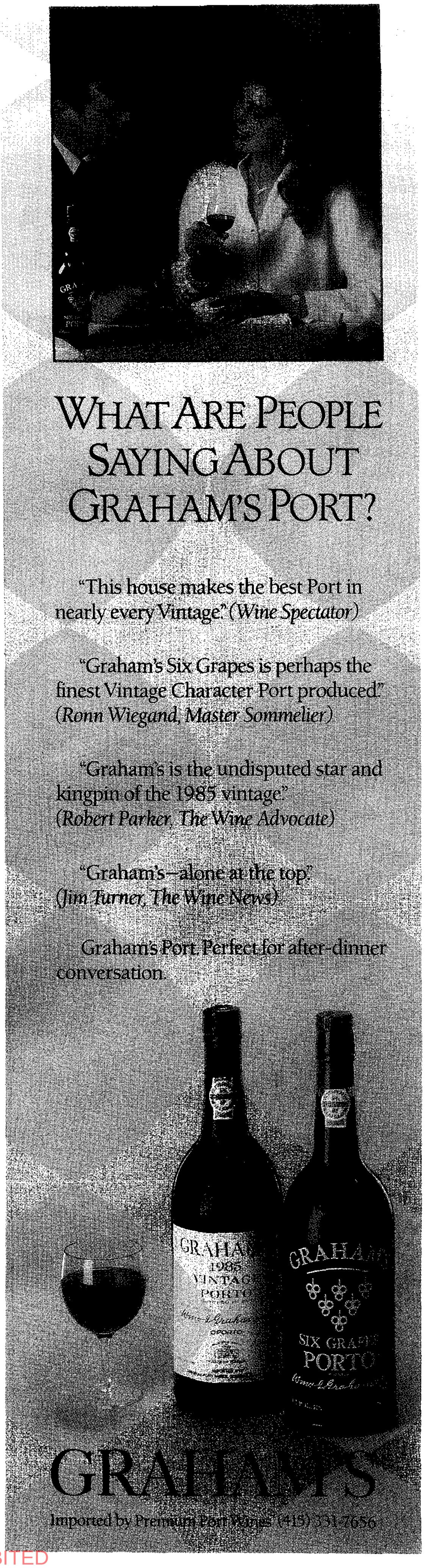
"Oh, I can be very polite, too. I may use bad language sometimes, but I still hope I'm not impolite or offensive to people in general."

"But you're a little argumentative."

"That's because you ask questions that need to be answered. That man in my office also has straightforward opinions. But when you saw him—and usually when I see him—it is in a situation where there is nothing at issue. So he can just toy—toy with words, toy with a situation. He makes jokes. I can make jokes, too, though I suppose I am more abusive in jokes than he is. But, basically, this is a different situation. Have you noticed I always say 'basically'? Because you are always trying to squeeze opinions from me, and these opinions are more or less radical. But that doesn't mean that I'm radical on a day-to-day basis. On a day-to-day basis, these questions don't come up."

"So in this unusual circumstance, where you are being, as it were, interrogated—"

"Yes, that's right. It is unusual. Normally, you can spend whole days when no serious issue comes up. When you don't have to assume any particular



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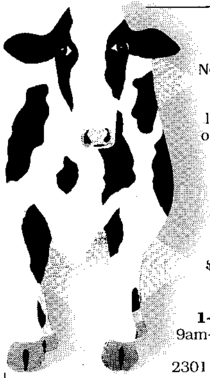

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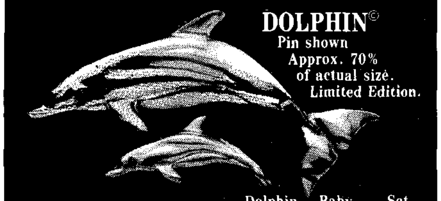

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position all day. When"—Kumermann toyed—"you can just be charming."

As we were leaving the university, Kumermann did something he had never done before: he helped me with my coat. The gesture—clearly prompted by our conversation—touched and amused me. So he was a closet charmer after all. As we picked up the remains of our lunch, I asked him what I should do with the plastic spoon I had used to eat my yogurt. In the grocery, I had asked him if they provided spoons with the yogurt; he had given me a withering look and groped around in his knapsack until he found a pink plastic spoon. He now took it back from me, wiped it with his handkerchief, and restored it to the knapsack. He returned to his office to work on the Arafat story, and I headed for Vinohrady, a quiet residential neighborhood that began at the top of Wenceslas Square, where I had never seen any fellow-tourists, and where there was a large old park.

On the way to the park, I passed handsome, solid nineteenth-century five-story apartment buildings in a state of gentle decay; through their spacious front hallways I could glimpse romantic vistas of lushly verdant back yards in which large trees grew. In the almost empty park, I sat on a bench and thumbed through a guidebook, trying to find the name of the park, where I thought I might have been taken as a small child. As I thumbed, I realized that I had slipped the wrong guidebook into my handbag; instead of a guide to Prague, I had brought a guide to the whole of Czechoslovakia. I continued leafing through it, however, reading the title headings of lake regions, mountain ranges, towns, and villages, and making trips to them in my imagination. Some of the place-names were familiar, having figured in family history or in songs and stories of my childhood, and one of them, the town Domažlice, haltingly brought to mind a song my parents used to sing, a song I did not know I knew anymore:

Žádný neví co jsou Domažlice.
Žádný neví co je to Taus.
Taus je to německy, Domažlice česky.
Žádný neví co je to Taus.

No one knows what Domažlice is.
No one knows what Taus is.
Taus is German, Domažlice is Czech.
No one knows what Taus is.

As this nonsense verse emerged—a relic of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

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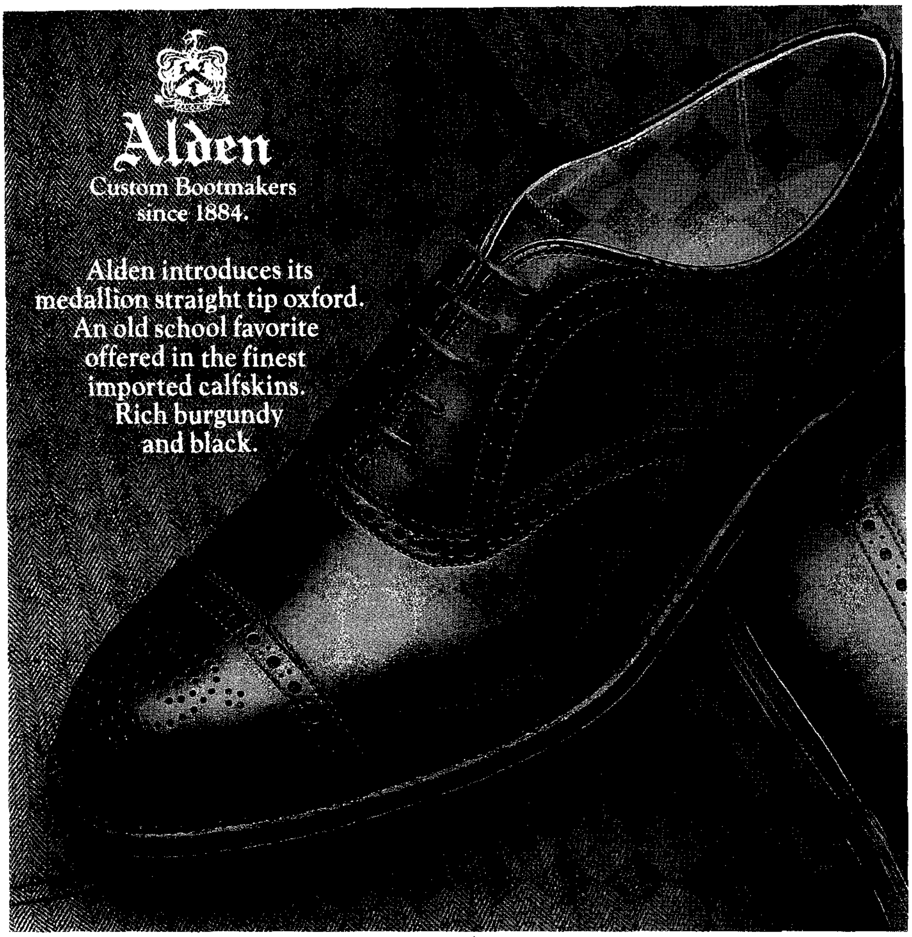
and its Germanifying geography—the door of memory slowly swung open. What neither the ice cream nor the visit to the apartment could achieve, the sight of "Domažlice" on the page had done. The agreeable fragrance of the First Republic and of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Czech folk and literary culture wafted out of the song, evoking the atmosphere of my childhood years with startling poignancy. The baggage of my Czech heritage, which I had refused to trail after me in my adopted country and had, as it were, left checked at the station, now stood massed before me, the lids open and the contents spilling out. Songs, stories, legends, jokes, anecdotes, reminiscences, poems, images came to me in a nostalgic rush. The indirection and playfulness of the Czech mind, with its distinctive vocabulary of tenderness—the qualities that have so endeared Czechs to foreigners and caused them to be regarded as the Minoans of Central Europe—were present to me as perhaps they had never been present before. The Czech part of my identity, which had always lain below the surface of my "real life" as an American child and American adult, and had affected it in subtle but palpable ways, now appeared to me with moving vividness. I rifled through the trunks with delight and affection and gratitude. My Jewishness was something else—a different order of influence, occupying a darker, less accessible region of my psyche. Like Kumermann's father, my parents fearfully played down the fact that we were Jewish. Only as an adult did I, again like Kumermann, claim my Jewish identity and form my sense of myself as a Jew, although, unlike Kumermann, I had not become a religious one. As I interrogated Kumermann about his life under the old and the new orders, my mind was never entirely removed from a period of time years before he was born, for whose horrors a string of place-names has provided a kind of necessary, inadequate metonymy: Auschwitz, Dachau, Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Theresienstadt, Ravensbrück. The Czechs, like the Hungarians, the Poles, the Romanians, the French, the Dutch—like everyone but the Danes—had not saved their Jews. Even my joy in the velvet revolution had ultimately been tempered by my (spared) Jew's awareness of this fact—by my need to keep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the beguiling Czechs at a certain distance, lest the memory of the six million be dulled. The thorny, argumentative, emotionally closed Kumermann provided me with my defense against the danger.

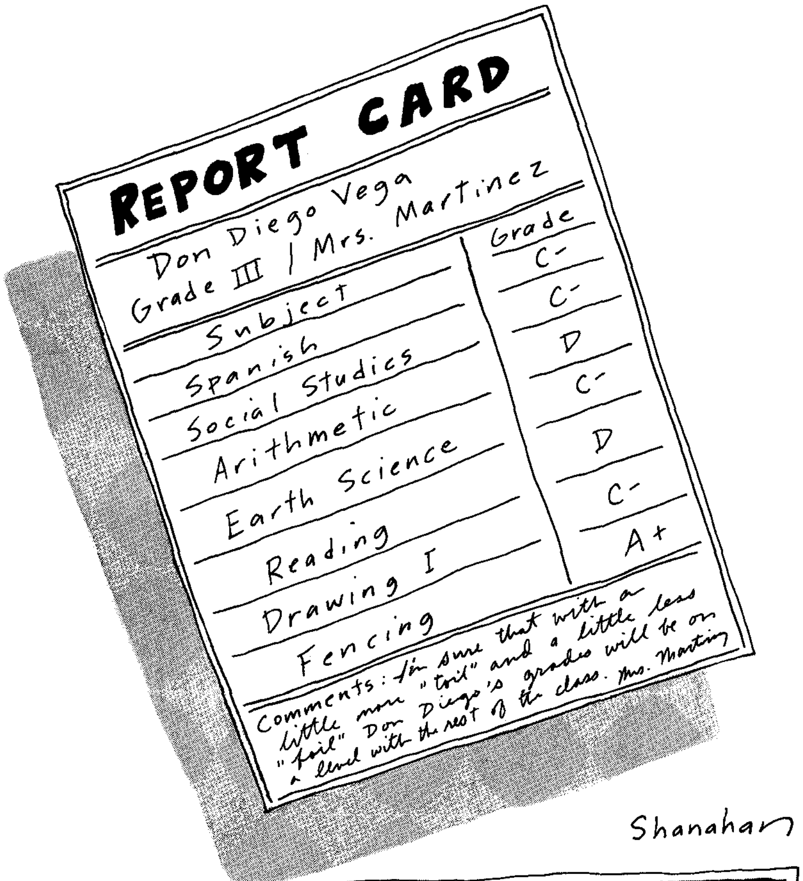
I LEFT the park, and instead of going to the Cukrárna for my afternoon coffee I headed for the river, to see how the swan had survived her dreadful night. I was relieved to find her in place and unscathed. The rats were gone, and a pleasing daylight scene now greeted the passersby as they paused in their strolling to lean over the balustrade and gaze fondly down on the swan, who was fending off ducks and small birds in the grass with a composed, matter-of-fact air; the tense desperation of the night was gone.

When travelling, one is both more open to new impressions and more prone to blunt their force through the act of analogizing. We make the unfamiliar familiar through a kind of sleight of hand; the phrase "it is like" domesticates the exotic, gives us the illusion of having got our bearings, allows us to make ourselves at home when we are nowhere near it. My initial mistaking of the swan for papers strewn on the grass doubtless derived from some such familiarizing tendency of the mind, as did my subsequent association of her, on the night of the rats, with small, hemmed-in countries like Czechoslovakia, whose geography is their destiny, and whose condition is one of chronic stuckness. Now, as I watched the swan, confident and serene after her dark ordeal, yet another analogy offered itself: that of Havel himself, who had also weathered a bad passage and was now reaping the rewards of his fortitude and courage. In one of his letters to Olga from prison, Havel writes of friends who have emigrated and are "doing what they enjoy at last, they are involved in their work, free from endless complications, no doubt viewing our toiling and moiling as pointless now, while I, on the other hand, am deprived of all that, without the slightest chance of working in a theatre and revelling in the ideas that theatre has always inspired in me." But he adds that such thoughts "always end with a peculiar sensation of inner joy that I am where I should be, that I have not turned away from myself, that I have not bolted for the emergency exit, and that, for all the privations, I am rid of the worst privation of all (one that I have known myself, too): the feeling that I could not measure up to my task, though I may not have set it myself—at least not in this form and to this degree—but merely accepted it from the hand of fate, accident, and history."

I also thought of one of the émigrés—Milan Kundera—who had finally seen no point in hanging on in Czechoslovakia after his books were banned, and had viewed the work of the dissidents with skepticism and irony. One of the leitmotivs of "The Unbearable Lightness of Being," and surely the aspect of the book that galled the Czech opposition more than any question of true-to-lifeness, was Kundera's pessimism about national and individual fate and his pitiless examination of the sentimentality and vulgarity and self-aggrandizement—he calls it kitsch—that can creep into the work of activist movements such as the one Havel headed. Already in 1969, when Kundera published an essay challenging Havel's position called "Radicalism and Exhibitionism," he was expressing the harsh, dark views that were to reach a culmination in "The Unbearable Lightness of Being." There is a passage in the novel that most sharply reflects Kundera's skepticism. It concerns Tomáš's refusal to sign the statement of complicity with the authorities (a retraction of a letter to the editor of a newspaper), which will cost him his job as a hospital surgeon and ultimately propel him into the world of window-washing. Before making the decision, Tomáš becomes aware of pressure from people who want him to sign—who, he notes with surprise, are not only people who have themselves compromised and collaborated but also people who refused to compromise and collaborate and have been persecuted:

> *Everyone* wanted him to write the retraction; it would make *everyone* happy! The people with the first type of reaction would be happy because by inflating cowardice, he would make their actions seem commonplace and thereby give them back their lost honor. The people with the second type of reaction, who had come to consider their honor a special privilege never to be yielded, nurtured a secret love for the cowards, for without them their courage would soon erode into a trivial, monotonous grind admired by no one.

Through Havel's p[illegible]e personal example and his simple, profound credo that one should "work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed," he imparted to this grind its transcendent beauty, and protected it against kitsch. In the glow of the velvet rev-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THE MARKS OF ZORRO

olutions of Central Europe, Kundera's mordant psychology and sociology and his bleak view of the human prospect seemed carping and irrelevant. (Kundera himself came to none of the Czech inauguration events or New Year's celebrations; in January, he wrote a sincere, if somewhat nervous, tribute to Havel, published here in *The New Republic*, and in March he was said to have made a brief, secret visit to Prague.) But as time goes on and history reassumes its normal iron guise, Kundera's work may well regain its old power, and his use of the emergency exit may well seem less like a misstep and more like a fateful artistic choice.

ON Saturday, following instructions from Kumermann, I took a tram out of Prague and disembarked at a desolate stop, three or four miles away, named Palmovka. A few minutes later, another tram disgorged Kumermann, who was carrying a bucket filled with dirt and the pansies I had brought. We were going to his allotment garden, where he worked on weekends. We waited for yet another tram, which came promptly (tram service is very good in Prague), and ten minutes later got out at an even more desolate stop. Kumermann led me across a highway abutting a large, ugly housing project that lowered over an empty wasteland. We came to a dirt road and followed it up a slope, passing small stucco houses with flowering fruit trees in their front gardens. After the road passed under a railroad, the landscape began to take on a more wildly rural aspect. Budding brush and tender early-spring flowers grew along the roadside. The temperature was mild, and the sky was an exciting mixture of fast-moving dark clouds and sudden piercing glints of sunlight. It was nice to be walking in the country in early spring, and I said so to Kumermann. "April is the cruellest month," he said in response. I nodded. We walked on, and I felt Kumermann struggle with himself—and lose. He simply couldn't not inquire, "Do you know who wrote that?"

"Yes," I said, and when Kumermann continued to look at me challengingly I added the name he needed to hear. Just then Kumermann reminded me of the endearing Mr. Spock, in the science-fiction television series "Star Trek," who is half human and half Vulcan, and who allegorizes the

André Previn

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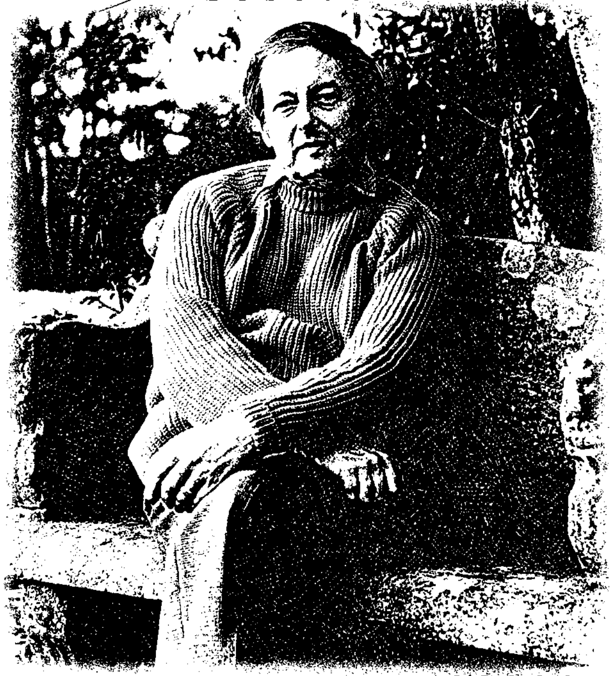

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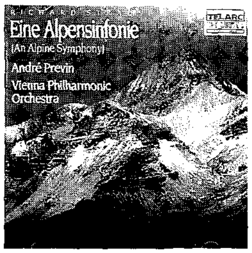

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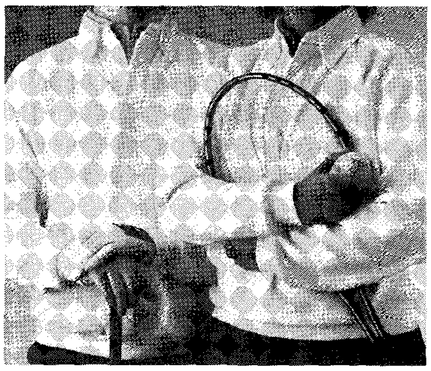

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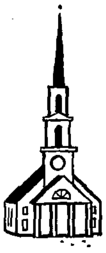
pathos of a nature in which the capacity for reasoning and remembering is greater than the capacity for feeling and intuiting.

When we reached the top of the slope, the allotment garden came into view: a large tract of land divided into equal plots of about three thousand square feet, on which vegetables, flowers, and small fruit trees had been planted, and small houses built. Kumermann led me to his plot. There was a woodshed in one corner and, in the middle, the foundation of a projected small house. The garden had an unruly, unfinished character. There were piles of topsoil standing in weedy, uncultivated areas. In the planted part, strawberries rambled amid dandelions; there were also gooseberry, raspberry, and black-currant bushes, clumps of onions and chives, and a few infant fruit trees. I asked Kumermann where his garden ended. "It's easy to tell," he said. "Where it's orderly, it's not ours." It was true. The other gardens were traditional European kitchen gardens—rich, brown, weedless earth, the plants set in straight, neat rows. Kumermann told me that the messy appearance of his garden had led to bad feelings on the part of the other gardeners, and so had the fact that he had not yet built his "bungalow." According to the rules governing the allotment gardens, each holder of a plot had to build such a structure, and build it according to strict specifications. Kumermann said he felt no need to have a house in a garden forty minutes from his apartment—since he had no wish to sleep or eat there—and was taking his time fulfilling this contractual obligation. He had got the plot, for which there was a long waiting list, through the intervention of a friend in the bureaucracy, and through a five-hundred-crown bribe. "Basically, the difference between Western and Bolshevik systems is that in the West you do not meddle in other people's business unless you're asked," he said. "Isn't that right? But here they're always looking at your garden and always telling you what to do. All right—if it is messy here, that's my business. But they tell you it doesn't look nice and you should take better care of it. You should do this and you should do that. They consider it beautiful to have long rows of houses exactly the same—which I consider intolerable. Not only ugly but inhuman. But they like it, and there is no way to talk to them."

I asked him who the other gardeners were—people like him, who came out from Prague?



"No. Most of the people are from around here, which is what makes it so stupid to build the bungalows. It's only a short walk from their apartments to the garden—and still they want to spend their nights here. They come from one housing project and want to create another one. The system has penetrated so deep under their skin that they can't be human anymore." I refrained from challenging Kumermann's idea that conformity is an exclusively Communist trait and from pointing out that the desire to be like everyone else is no less human than the wish to be different. The orderly gardens of the neighbors did not seem sinister to me, nor did the undistinguished but inoffensive bungalows—cheap little wooden houses—while the anarchy of Kumermann's garden seemed pointless. Nature has her quiet, secret rules (we call them ecology), and the gardener has his more legible conventions (cultivation). To liken the rules of horticulture, which have evolved over centuries of trial and error, to totalitarian structures was to misunderstand the idea of a garden.

Kumermann went into the shed and changed into a pair of denim overalls. He began to plant the pansies, and when I asked if there was some work I could do he said the dandelions in the strawberry bed could be weeded, and handed me a weeding tool of unusual design. We worked quietly in different parts of the plot for about half an hour. Then the sky darkened, thunder sounded, and rain came down in a violent shower. We ran into the shed. In the dark I could make out disorderly tangles of implements and tools, coils of hose, boxes, buckets, cans, rags, clothes, blankets, debris. Kumermann put a dirty blanket on an upside-down pail for me to sit on, and sat on another pail himself. The rain pelted the roof and poured down in sheets. We chatted companionably. Deep feelings of coziness and security are aroused by the situation of taking shelter in a small, dark place during a storm. Like characters in nineteenth-century novels who are regularly obliged to seek shelter from the rain in summerhouses in order that the plot of their intimacy may go forward, so Kumermann and I drew closer together as we sat on our pails and watched the lightning flash and the rain come down. We speculated on the scene at the Letná Plain, where the Pope was even then blessing the multitudes. For the first time, he asked me questions about myself, and listened with interest as I told him about my family and my life in New York, and about my own garden in Massachusetts. But then, as the rain began to subside, we returned to our old, skewed journalistic dialogue.

I brought up the subject of Kumermann's invitation to Israel by the P.L.O., and told him of some second thoughts I had had about his response to it. "At first, I thought you were being a bit naïve," I said. "You didn't seem to be aware that it's against journalistic practice to accept favors from people you intend to write about—that favors compromise you. But later I thought, That's all very well for me to say, coming, as I do, from a magazine that pays my expenses. Here in Prague, I realized, where magazines and newspapers have no money, journalists must take their opportunities as they come."

Kumermann heard only the first part of my comment. He said defensively, "First of all, I never took the P.L.O. offer that seriously. Now my colleague says he's not sure he's going, either. But the main thing is that I see the P.L.O. as killers and enemies, and consider Israel partly my own country. This view would not change if I accepted the P.L.O. invitation."

"Ideally, your magazine would send you."

"But it is not possible at the moment."

"I know."

"If I take the ticket from the P.L.O. and still don't write anything favorable to them—would that satisfy you?"

"Under normal circumstances, no. But I understand that you have to bend the rules of normal journalistic practice in the current economic situation."

"You could say that there is no normal journalistic practice in this country," Kumermann said. "So there is no bending of anything. The previous practice was to strictly follow the Party rules." He added, "Maybe it's the American puristic approach that is behind your objection."

"We can afford our purism," I

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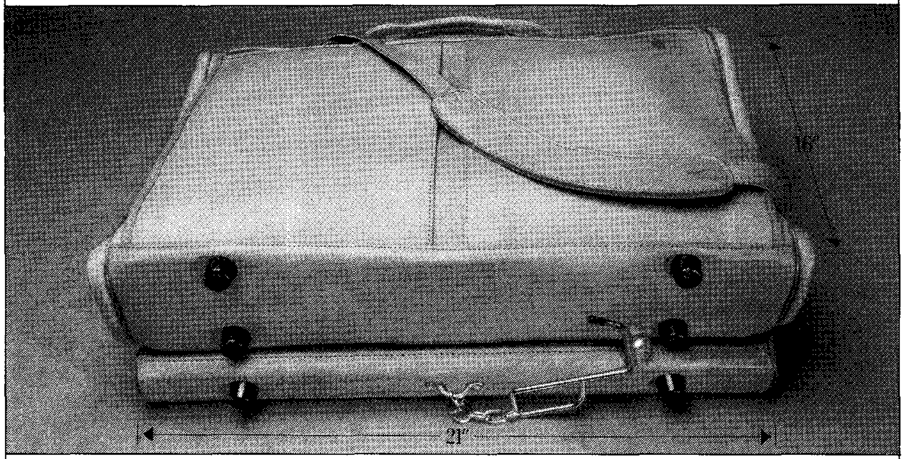

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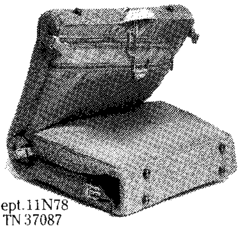

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said. "We would probably do the same as you in your situation."

"It would be nice to see the world. Right now, we are dependent on the occasional trips that Havel makes, or on the occasional international seminar where journalists are invited. These are our only opportunities to report abroad."

Kumermann spoke contemptuously of the ignorance of the American journalists he had met in Prague. "They ask you such stupid questions. They don't do any basic research. 'How many people are there in Czechoslovakia?' They come unprepared. For all they know, they could be in Bulgaria."

"I have probably asked you some stupid questions," I said.

"Yes, some."

The rain stopped, and I told Kumermann that I had to get back to Prague for an appointment. I handed him his weeding tool, praising its efficacy. As he took it, he murmured something to the effect that I had probably pulled out the strawberries instead of the dandelions. When I looked at him uncertainly, he said, "That's an example of my unpleasant humor." He added, "I don't know—something drives me to it. Somebody says or does something, and I immediately find some kind of joke in it."

"Do you know the word 'needling'?" I asked.

"Yes. That describes it. Needling clears the field, in a way. Those who can't stand it soon get lost."

"So the people who like you are those who—"

"Yes, those who pass the test. Most people come and go."

THE next day, I went for Sunday lunch at the Valentas'. In daylight, their apartment did not have the incoherence and hauntedness of its evening aspect; the curtains were drawn back to let in sunlight, along with a breathtaking view of the river and the Hradčany. One could see why Havel had chosen not to move into the Presidential residence at the Castle and had remained in his apartment, on the embankment, a few blocks from the Valentas': to live where one can look at the Castle is surely preferable to living in the Castle itself, where one merely looks at one's old apartment. The Valentas' son was present this time, and the Valentas exhibited the tension and artificiality that parents whose children are a grief to them exhibit in their presence. At our previous meeting, Jana had told me of Ivan's troubled history with alcohol, drugs, and ulcers. He had been ill during high school, had dropped out of the university in his second year, and had been working—not for political reasons—at menial jobs ever since. He had a girlfriend whom Jana did not approve of—a woman twelve years older than he was, who had a ten-year-old son.

"She's not much," Jana had said. "A small, thin blonde, not pretty, washed-out. She looks her age. He's at her place constantly."

"She's not a bad sort," Egon had said.

"She's too old for him," Jana had said.

Ivan came into the room a few minutes after I arrived. He was wearing jeans, a T-shirt marked "Indiana University," moccasins, and no socks. He was thin—too thin—with dark, curly hair that was already beginning to recede. He had his father's handsome features, but not his father's expression of European irony and animation; instead, he exhibited a kind of American blankness and lassitude. He was a beautiful, lost boy. The liaison with the faded divorcée almost had a ring of inevitability about it. His manner to me was polite and pleasant; nothing passed between him and his father; between him and his mother a complicated, painful, ongoing agon wearily played itself out, its most overt expression being a constant interrupting of each other, with sometimes the mother and sometimes the son prevailing. Valenta affected the air of a man so uninterested in youth that he was bored even by his own child. (I had heard that he was an extremely popular teacher—that his lectures were brilliant, and his courses always oversubscribed.)

During lunch, Ivan drank a good deal of wine, smoked (as did both his parents), and ate almost nothing. I could see Jana tensely following the progress of his non-meal, and feel the effort it cost her not to urge him to eat. I asked him what he did. He said that he had changed jobs just before the revolution. His old job had been driving an ambulance. "What I saw at the hospital made me sick," he said. "Maybe things will be better now, but then it was completely corrupt. Only the people with money got decent care. The ambulance drivers were worse than anyone. They would extract money from the relatives of desperately ill people. Some of them would simply refuse to take sick people to the hospital if the relatives didn't pay up. Once—"

"But you didn't do that," Jana cut in.

Ivan did not yield. "—a man with a heart attack died on the way to the hospital, and the relatives complained about the driver, but nothing came of it. I finally couldn't stand it anymore. I now have a job driving a delivery van."

"The hospitals are scenes from hell," Jana said. "Last year, when Ivan had to have tests—"

It was Ivan's turn to interrupt. "I may do this for another year or so. Then I hope to go to Switzerland and study restaurant management. I have the fantasy of opening an ethnic restaurant in Prague."

Jana sighed, and dropped the matter of Ivan's tests. She cleared the table and would not let me help her. Valenta lit a cigarette. He watched Ivan pour himself a glass of wine, and then, with his elaborate courtesy, reached for the bottle and added wine to my nearly full glass.

"What kind of ethnic restaurant?" I asked.

"Vietnamese maybe. Or North African."

Valenta listened with an ironic expression. Jana came back from the kitchen carrying a plate of pastries. I recognized them as the blowsy cakes sold at the Cukrárna and at every other confectionery in Prague. The uniformity of Prague's food and consumer goods had only gradually registered on me. It had taken me some time to realize that the attractively and variously decorated food shops were in fact all filled with almost exactly the same limited goods. Tzvetan Todorov, in a memorable passage of his article on post-totalitarian depression, which was published earlier this year in *The New Republic*, reproves the glib critics of the consumerism of the former Soviet-satellite countries:

> Several German intellectuals and politicians had hard words for their fellow-citizens who flung themselves on the West German shops as soon as they could. . . . These could only be the words of people who have forgotten, or never knew, the personal humiliation inflicted by the permanent lack of the most elementary consumer goods: the humiliation of silent and hostile lines, the humiliation inflicted on you by salespeople who seem angry to see you standing there, the humiliation of al-

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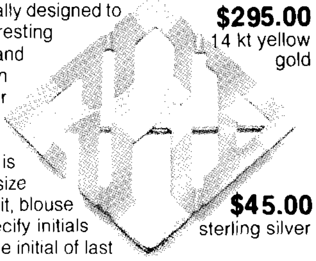

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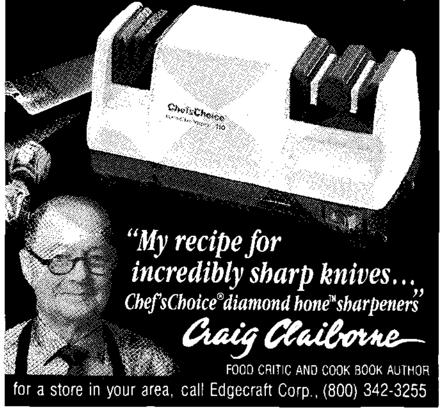

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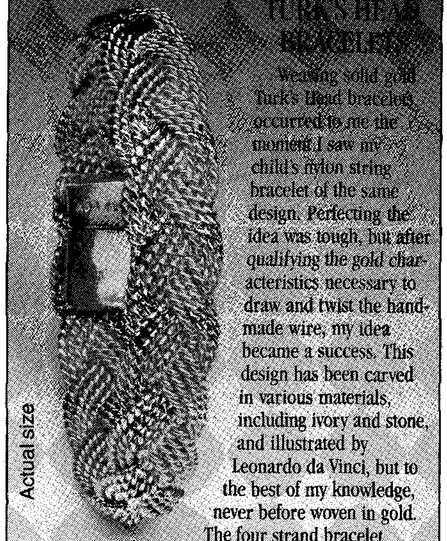

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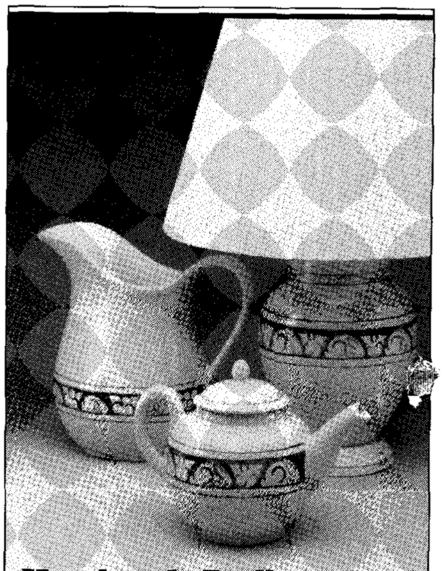
ways having to buy what there is, not what you need. The systematic penury of material goods strikes a blow at the moral dignity of the individual. By throwing themselves on the shops of the West, the inhabitants of the East are not so much thinking of filling their stomachs as they are enjoying a freedom that the Western consumer does not feel because he is so accustomed to it.

When Jana offered the pastries, Ivan and Valenta refused, and I couldn't but accept one. As I ate it—and it wasn't as bad as it looked—I recalled a pastry I had eaten on my first trip to Prague, which was far worse than it looked. It had been offered to me by members of a macrobiotic cult whom I had met on the street in front of one of the video sets that the Civic Forum had placed on busy street corners to show key moments of the velvet revolution: the beating of the students, the rallies in Wenceslas Square, the inauguration of Havel, speeches of Havel. I got into conversation with a couple watching the documentary—a ruddy, friendly man and his thin, pasty-faced, unsmiling wife—who told me they were in Prague for the weekend, staying with their macrobiotic guru; they came from a village where they tended cows and calves at a factory farm. The next day, they had driven me to a villa in the suburbs where the guru lived—a twenty-four-year-old girl with braids, a doctor, who had come under the sway of the macrobiotic idea while at medical school and had gathered around herself a small band of believers. The villa belonged to the girl's parents—the father was a diplomat—who were away. The house had the look of a place whose owners were away. It was filthy and neglected; I caught a glimpse of a kitchen whose counters were loaded with piles of food-encrusted bowls and plates. The whole place evoked the atmosphere of American college dormitories, or the communes of the sixties. The girl in braids gave a lecture on the macrobiotic diet as a cure for and preventive of disease, citing studies and experiments done in Japan, America, Sweden, and elsewhere. (In the car, the couple had told me of the miraculous remission of the wife's terminal cancer after she went on the macrobiotic regimen.) As the guru held forth, in a mechanical, relentless little voice, other members of the cult wandered in and out. The macrobiotic movement had been one of the deviant movements suppressed by the Communists; now it



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could come out into the open, and its members could disseminate the macrobiotic theories and alert the nation to the dire effects of the regular Czech diet on the human organism. The unsmiling wife came in with a teapot, cups, and a plate of very suspect-looking pastries. "You will see how good food can be without sugar," the husband said. The pastry was unbelievably awful—I remember rubberiness combined with a kind of dank, sweet, mealy staleness. The tea had an unfamiliar, punitive taste. These people, I thought, were like health cranks everywhere: innocent, well-intentioned, very boring people in the single-minded pursuit of their idea. I did not have to come to Prague to meet them. But, thinking of them again at the Valentas', I said to myself, "Yes, I did have to come to Prague to meet them, as I had to come to Prague to meet the Valentas." The narratives we call anthropology or travel writing or foreign journalism are created out of the tension between two ideas: "They are like us" and "They are different from us." The latter gives such narratives their status as repositories of new information about the world, while the former acts as a kind of brake on the alienation that comes from true difference. The field worker or travel writer or foreign correspondent, if he is honest with himself, is constantly confronted with the abashing incompleteness of his knowledge; even more disconcerting, he may suspect that this very incompleteness is what imparts to his narrative its requisite exoticism. After my return to America, I spoke with Kumermann on the telephone several times, and once he said, in his mocking manner, "I know you must be working for the C.I.A. to ask me so many questions." The foreign correspondent/travel writer/anthropologist is indeed a kind of spy. The direct questions he asks are only a façade, behind which the operation of covert watching and listening is mounted; his work—like the work of all spies—is tied to contingency and marked by melancholy.

Jana brought in a tray of coffee, and Valenta switched on the radio. Every Sunday afternoon at two-fifteen, the President spoke on the radio for half an hour in an informal talk with an interviewer, and these talks were much liked and much listened to. They were recorded at the Lány Mansion, which had been Tomáš Masaryk's summer

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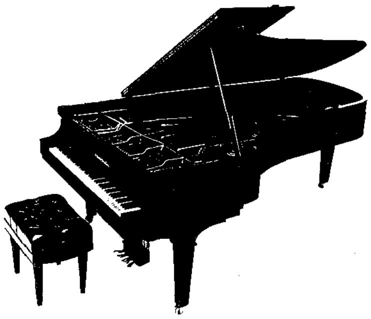

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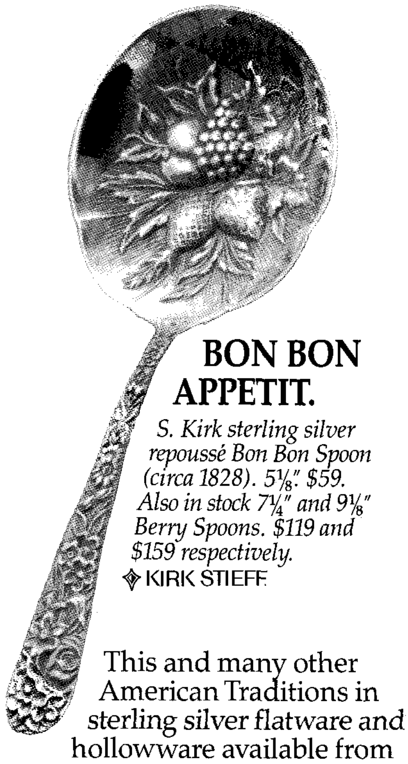

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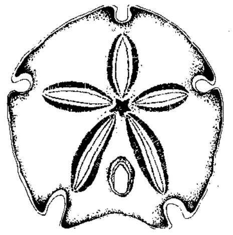
PHELAN'S

residence. Havel came on—his voice now as familiar to me as his face in the photographs that, after the events of November, had been pasted on every shopwindow in Prague. His voice is a deep baritone, with a somewhat toneless quality; what makes it recognizable and remarkable is that it is the voice of an individual speaking to other individuals, rather than that of a speaker addressing an audience. The self-relishing unction present in the voices of so many politicians is entirely absent from Havel's. He is direct, simple, clear, funny. He wears his learning lightly, but he wears it. He talks in a way that everyone can understand, using a plain vocabulary and forward-moving syntax, avoiding the sort of involuted, ironic floweriness that Czech intellectuals are prone to, but he is not folksy or condescending; he is authentic to an almost electrifying degree. The broadcast began with a question about ecology, to which Havel replied, "Here, as in everything, I turn to the moral dimension. We shouldn't just think of ourselves." He said he believed that if everyone behaved unselfishly and did his share, the country's grave environmental problems could be solved. He added that he did not believe that productivity and ecological concern are inimical. The centerpiece of the broadcast was Havel's answer to a criticism of himself. "People say I make too many trips abroad and don't take enough interest in the problems of this country," Havel said, and went on, "I have been President for one hundred and fifteen days. Of these days, I have spent thirteen abroad. That is not a very long time. But I believe I have accomplished more during those trips than I have accomplished at home, where I often think that what I do is useless. There are arguments between factions, I reconcile them; they argue again, I reconcile them again. In my trips abroad, I have none of this frustration. Rather, I have the sense that I am learning a great deal about my job. I want to stress that it isn't just tourism, it isn't just the wish to see foreign places, that motivates me. I have to learn how to be a President, and we all have to learn how to be citizens of a democracy. We can't ask people above us to do it for us." Then, with the artist's ability to get below the surface of things, Havel got below the surface of the criticism and to its essence, likening the complaints of his countrymen about his trips abroad to the hysterical anxiety of insecure children whose mother goes away for half an hour.

Later, thinking about the broadcast, I was struck by the fact that Havel had projected himself as a mother rather than as a father—and it struck me as being characteristic of him. His habit of forgiveness—the mother's riposte to the father's rule of law—is one of the signatures of his leadership. In 1977, after a four-month detention, he told an interviewer, "Try as I might, I was unable to feel any personal revulsion or hatred against my interrogators and jailers. Rather, I tried to understand them, and I must confess that at times I was even sorry for them." In "Letters to Olga" he wrote, "I have different opinions of different people, but I cannot say that I hate anyone in the world. I have no intention of changing in that regard. If I did, it would mean that I had lost. Hatred has never been either my program or the point of departure for my actions." Since becoming President, Havel, following his nature, has made a number of conciliatory statements about Germany, which, almost alone of his public actions, have not been universally applauded. There are those who feel that it is not for him to forgive the Germans for the Holocaust—that here not a mother's mercy but a father's implacability is necessary.

After the broadcast, the tension between the three Valentas relaxed as they joined in praise of Havel.



"He's fantastic," Ivan said. During the program, his face had lost its torpor, and some animation still remained.

"Such a beautiful person," Jana said. "So human."

"Have you noticed that there are no Havel jokes?" Valenta said. "Not [illegible]. Which is unheard of. But Havel is beyond criticism—he's another Masaryk."

"Were there Masaryk jokes?" I asked.

Valenta thought. "Yes. There were Masaryk jokes."

Ivan looked at his watch and said he had to leave. It was clear from the look on Jana's face where he was going. I said I had to leave, too. I left with Ivan, and when I paused in the hallway to look back, the Valentas were standing in the door of the apartment, with the light and the view of Hradčany behind them, and something in their attitude suggested that they didn't know what they were going to do next.

ON my last night in Prague, I went with Kumermann to see Havel's "Largo Desolato" at the Theatre on the Balustrade. My second cousin Vladimir Vodička, who is the theatre's artistic director, had presented me with two coveted tickets (the play had been sold out since it opened, two weeks earlier), and I had invited Kumermann. His response to the invitation had been to ask if a third ticket could be found for Jarmila. I was torn between a feeling of annoyance and the thought that it was nice of him to think of Jarmila; however, another ticket could not be found, and Kumermann did not give up his to his wife. In honor of the occasion, he had put on a tweed jacket over his jeans and was wearing a tie. We met in the theatre's anteroom, where my suave and genial one-quarter-Jewish cousin greeted us. I introduced Kumermann, and as they shook hands Kumermann said that though Vodička probably didn't remember him, they had met two or three years before, when Kumermann had come to the theatre to wash windows. My cousin had to admit that he did not remember Kumermann's professional visit, and affably asked him what he was doing now. Kumermann told him, and the men chatted about the new Prague magazines and newspapers. Vodička invited us for a drink at the bar. He assured us, "You are going to enjoy yourselves tonight. Grossman is a genius." (Jan Grossman, the play's director, had been the Balustrade's head of drama during its seminal period, and had left the theatre shortly after Havel did, in 1968.) I had seen "Largo Desolato" in New York, in a production at the Public Theatre, and I had read the text, and I had not enjoyed myself. "Largo" is the first full-length play Havel wrote after his long prison term. As he describes it in "Disturbing the Peace," it "examines what happens when the personification of resistance finds himself at the end of his tether." Although he drew on his own "post-prison despair" and "did put a bit of my own instability" into the main character, the play is not auto-

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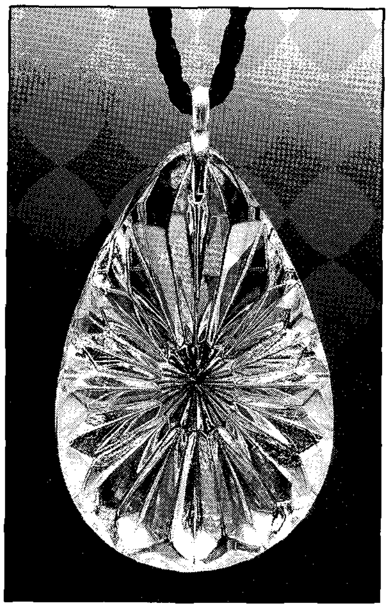

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biographical, he says, but "has ambitions to be a human parable, and in that sense it's about man in general." He (somewhat Jesuitically) concludes, "And anyway, if I was as badly off as Kopřiva"—the main character—"I couldn't have written a thing, certainly not with any ironic distance, so, in fact, the very existence of this play argues against its being autobiographical."

In my previous encounters with it, the play had bored and irritated me. Its dissident hero, who is cracking up under the strain of his noble work (his anxiety exacerbated by the expectations of his followers, the harassment of the secret police, and the grumpiness of his girlfriend), put me off as a pretentious bore; the play's attempts at absurdist irony seemed leaden and mannered. Kumermann, who had read the play in samizdat, agreed with my estimate; like me, he felt that Havel's literary reputation would rest on his essays and on "Letters to Olga," rather than on his plays.

We took our places in the tiny auditorium (it has only two hundred seats), and promptly at seven-thirty the lights dimmed (like Prague trains and trams, Prague plays and operas run on time), and as music sounded backstage—a thumping, raucous, speeded-up version of the Alla Turca finale of Mozart's Piano Sonata K. 331, in A major—the curtain went up. It was a red taffeta curtain with a ruffle on the bottom, and it didn't just go up but romped up, with a saucy and farcical air that matched the music's impudence. A sort of gasp of astonished delight arose from the audience, followed by laughter, which did not let up for the next two hours. Grossman is indeed a genius. Under his direction, an ensemble of gifted actors transformed Havel's inert text into an electrifying theatrical experience. The play was done like frothy French farce, at very high speed, with delicate, comic precision. (The set was merely a lot of doors and a floor strewn with cushions.) The horror of the protagonist's situation came out of the pores of the comedy, as it were. Where in the earnest New York production one had been bored by the man's self-absorption and had resented being asked to admire and pity him, here one only too gladly obeyed the production's imperative, which was simply to laugh at and with him. Jiří Bartoška's performance of Kopřiva was extraordinary: his rendering of a man having a nervous breakdown (his costume throughout was pajamas, and much of his time onstage was spent sprawled on the floor cushions) was entirely and horribly believable, because it was so close to the bone of ludicrous everyday unhappiness. Havel's remote parable—his cold play about "man in general"—now took on urgent immediacy. The sense that each person's life is unique and mysterious and lived in a particular way, so evident in Havel's essays and letters, had lain dormant in the text of "Largo," waiting to be released on the stage. Havel has frequently written of the idea of theatre as a communal experience. In "Letters to Olga" he proposes that "seeing [a play] is more than just an act of perception, it is a form of human relationship. It is not only the actors onstage who make this event happen—through their living presence, their actions, and their lives—but the people in the audience as well." The phenomenon Havel describes occurred that night in Prague, and occurred with special force. Added to the usual electricity that theatre can generate was the extra voltage of the historical moment. It is not every day that you can sit in a theatre and laugh your head off at lines written by the President of your country, and the audience was full of the pleasure of that knowledge. The laughter was affectionate, familial, and cathartic. When the lights came on after the first act, I glanced over at Kumermann, and he was flushed and happy and elated as I had never seen him before. In the dark, we had already had the experience of shared delight, and now we agreed on having to revise our estimate of Havel as playwright. Kumermann was particularly taken with the performances of the actors who had played two secret policemen. "They were perfect—just like the ones who interrogated me. The same sliminess and stupidity."

The second (and last) act was as wonderful as the first. In the lobby, we told my cousin he had been right, and thanked him for a memorable evening. Outside, it was drizzling. Kumermann proposed to walk me to my hotel and

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then take the metro home. On an impulse, I said, "Let me show you something," and I took him over to the river to see the swan. I half hoped that she would no longer be there, that she had finally hatched her eggs. But she was there, and so were the rats. As she fended off the rats, the swan seemed less agitated than before and her vigil less terrifying, or perhaps I was better braced for the sight. I was not altogether unprepared for (though, all the same, disappointed in) Kumermann's reaction to my offering, which he received with the same apparent indifference with which he had received my present of chewing gum and comics. But as we left the embankment he said, in a kind of left-handed gesture of reciprocity, "Let me show *you* something now," and led me to a dark side street, where he pointed out a low, nondescript building that might have been the offices of a small business or manufacturing company but had no identifying marks. "That's the old security-police headquarters," he said. "That's where we were taken for interrogation." A few lights burned dimly within the depths of the building, and on the empty street outside there were a few cars with men in them who seemed vaguely connected to the building.

"What is going on there now?" I asked.

"I don't know," Kumermann said. He added, "I think the changes should have been more radical. The secret police should have been banned, and all its people thrown out. But the Civic Forum said, 'We don't want to be like them.' For a start, we should be more like them."

We turned in to Národní Třída, and as we approached Wenceslas Square a shared feeling of wanting to prolong the evening slowed our pace. At my hotel, we had a final drink and talk. Kumermann told me he thought he would be able to get to Israel on the Community's plane. He again fretted about his young editor-in-chief, about whom he had heard further things he hadn't liked, and with whom he was beginning to clash. "I'm afraid he's narrow-minded and we'll never agree." As we finished our drinks he said, "You said you liked my weeding tool. Would you like me to send you one?" I said I would like that very much. "All right, I had better be off." We embraced and said goodbye. I watched him shamble off with his heavy knapsack and his quick, grave tread.

Since then, we have spoken on the telephone a few times. In late April, he told me he had got to Israel (on a Community plane) and was working on an article about the trip. In mid-May, he reported that things had come to their anticipated unhappy head at his magazine, and that he had been fired. The young editor had turned down his Israel article and told him he did not have enough writing experience. Kumermann said he accepted the estimate of his work but resented being fired by someone he didn't respect. He also told me of a lesser misfortune: a trip that he and Jarmila had planned to East Berlin to visit museums had not come off, because on the eve of their departure Jarmila's passport could not be found. In our next conversation Kumermann reported that the passport had turned up five days later; it had fallen behind a drawer. ("It was my fault. Jarmila told me to look there, but I didn't look closely enough.") He also told me he had a new job, on a daily newspaper. In another conversation, he returned to the scene in his boyhood when he had read the official letter documenting his grandmother's death at Treblinka—this time articulating his sense of the transgression of his opening the letter ("the letter that I shouldn't have read—my father wasn't home and it was lying there and I opened it") but reiterating, "It didn't tell me anything. I didn't tie it to any evil, and I didn't have any feeling about it. I knew her picture on the wall—that was it." By mail, I have received from Kumermann a much cited article he had offered to send me, entitled "The Paradoxes of Milan Kundera," by Milan Jungmann, a Czech literary critic who also was a window-washer (his tenure was thirteen years), and who was also at pains to point out that Prague women didn't sleep with their window-washers. The weeding tool has not yet arrived.

—JANET MALCOLM

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MOST DISAPPOINTING CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

[*From the Rochester* (*N.Y.*) *Democrat and Chronicle*]

CORRECTION

Erroneous information was inadvertently inserted into the biographical summary accompanying a story on Peter Keefe in Tuesday's *Democrat and Chronicle*. Keefe cannot simultaneously whistle, stand on his head and drink beer.

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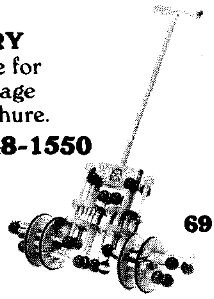

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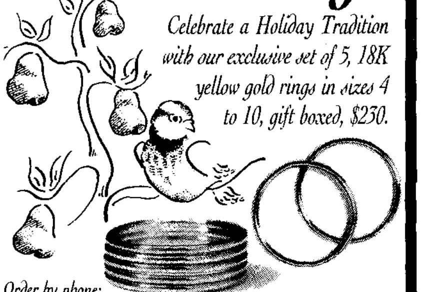

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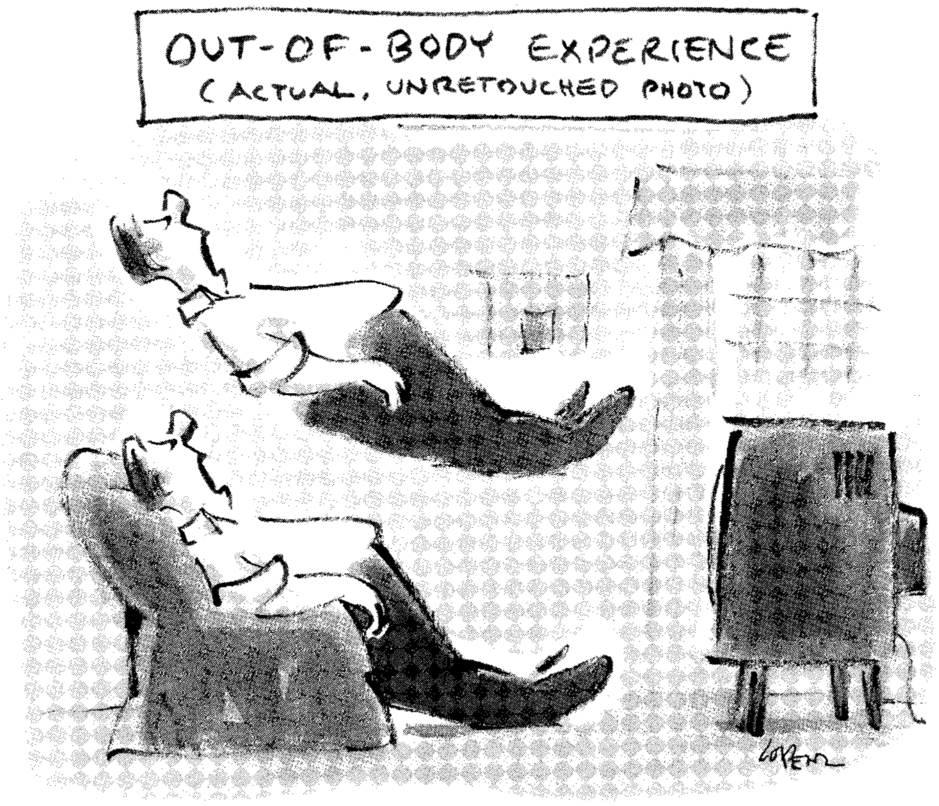
THE ITALIAN THING

I SHOULD probably begin by admitting that I'm soft on Italians. I'm talking about New York Italians now, although it's also true that I often find myself in a particularly sunny frame of mind when I'm in Italy. Actually, I'm talking about lower-Manhattan Italians. I live in lower Manhattan myself—in Greenwich Village. If I had to face a panel that told me that these days it is out-of-bounds to express even affectionate opinions of people by entire ethnic groups, I suppose I could scratch up a list of a few lower-Manhattan Italians I don't like, but my heart wouldn't be in the effort. A long time ago, I began employing a standard answer to the question of whether I had ever thought of moving out of the city: When the Italians leave, I'll leave. Since I started saying that, as it happens, a number of Italians have left, but many of them have been replaced by new arrivals from Italy. In the Village, we still have enough Italians to go around.

Anyone who is soft on Italians is a sucker for Tiro a Segno. The Tiro, as some of its members call it, is an Italian-American social club whose clubhouse has been carved out of three adjoining brownstones on Macdougal, just north of Houston Street—the border between the section of Greenwich Village settled by immigrants from northern Italy in the eighteen-eighties and the larger Italian neighborhood that sprang up in the South Village during the great wave of immigration from southern Italy a couple of decades later. My wife and I started going to the Tiro for lunch more than twenty years ago with Emanuel P. Popolizio, who is known to just about anybody he has ever come in contact with for more than ten or fifteen minutes as Wally. Wally was practicing law in the Village then, in an office on Eighth Street called Fazio & Popolizio, sharing with the American Accordionists' Association. What I remember best about the office is a wooden model of the cart that Wally's father—who came over from Basilicata, in the boot of Italy, around the beginning of the century—employed to deliver ice and coal. Wally, who grew up in the neighborhood, had always been active in community affairs. He was the chairman of Community Planning Board No. 2 for a while. He had lined up with the reformers against Carmine DeSapio, which made him an ally of Edward Koch in the days when, as it might be put by Village reformers who were later horrified by Hizzoner's chumminess with bosses and developers, "Koch was still trying, more or less, to be a mensch."

Wally still lives in the Village, but he no longer has a law office on Eighth Street. Until a few weeks ago, he was the chairman of the New York City Housing Authority. He is a stocky, exuberant man whose energy level and combativeness sometimes bring to mind Fiorello LaGuardia, who was himself a member of Tiro a Segno. Wally always said that when you walked into Tiro a Segno you and your family should feel like royalty. From the start, that was the way my wife and I felt. The captain would bring over a sort of menu board—one of those fuzzy black surfaces slotted to accommodate white plastic letters—that listed what was available for each of the five courses. It was clear from the captain's manner that we needn't limit ourselves to what was on the board. "Or maybe you'd like a little veal," he'd say. "Marsala? Piccata? Just with a few mushrooms?" The captain was a man named Manfredi, an impressive figure, whom I once heard a Tiro member describe perfectly in two words: Cesar Romero.

As a club for Italians who had met some professional or financial success, Tiro a Segno had virtually nothing in common with the storefront Italian social clubs in our neighborhood, but it also had little in common with the men's clubs and university clubs found in midtown. For instance, people at Tiro a Segno seemed to stick to their own tables less than they might in a conventional businessmen's club; Wally's friends often stopped to chat at our table, and sometimes sat down to join us for a double espresso. The food, of course, was nothing like the sort of uptown-club food that seems designed to reassure a guest that all members have descended from bona-fide Puritans. A member of the Tiro, putting aside his plate of roasted peppers to give the waiter room to set down the pasta e fagioli, might respond to a mention of standard American club food with a polite but slightly patronizing smile. These days, even men's clubs known



for their relentlessly conventional membership find it necessary to post occasional reminders about dress codes; the meals being what they are at the Tiro, the chairman of the house committee once felt constrained to add to the usual reminder the sentence "An *ongoing problem is the tendency of* some guests to loosen their ties at the collar." Members of the Tiro have always taken a strong, critical interest in what the club staff puts on the table. Wally told us that there had once been a ferocious controversy over a suggestion by one member that peanuts be included in the nut cups at the bar—a policy that some other members believed would leave any respectable guest with the impression that Tiro a Segno had fallen into the hands of peasants or know-nothings.

"I happen to know that the Yale Club has peanuts at the bar," I said.

Wally shrugged, and threw open his hands in a gesture that said, without a word being spoken, "Precisely my point. They don't know any better. Case closed."

The Tiro I became familiar with looked different from uptown clubs partly because it lacked the traditional lounges filled with the traditional leather chairs and the traditional dozers; it consisted of a bar and the dining room downstairs and a meeting room and cardroom on the second floor. Its best-known architectural feature was not immediately apparent to visitors: a shooting range in the basement. At the time Tiro was founded, a little more than a hundred years ago, a good many of the Italian immigrants in New York were from the Piedmont, a region of Italy where any fair-sized village might have a chapter of a national hunting club called Tiro a Segno—literally, "shoot the target." The Tiro a Segno club that the immigrants established in New York was built around hunting and shooting. For years, the club sent teams to shooting competitions. As late as 1981, there was a club boar hunt in Pennsylvania. Long before that, though, the club team, called the Fusileers, was competing in golf rather than shooting. The shooting aspect of the club had been reduced to target shooting in the basement with .22s on Friday nights—an activity that may or may not have returned to the members enough pleasure to make up for the lame jokes about mob gunsels that the range tends to inspire in some visitors.

Even with lounges, Tiro a Segno would not have looked like an uptown club. It had its own sort of interior decoration, which I always thought of as "very Italian." In 1976, a colleague of mine, the late Richard Harris, got interested in the South Village, and Wally Popolizio volunteered to show him around the neighborhood. Naturally, they had lunch at Tiro a Segno. In a *New Yorker* piece called "A Nice Place to Live" Harris described Tiro's dining room this way: "It was large and very Italian. Three walls were decorated with murals, the predominant color being that brilliant aqua which one sees only in Italian restaurants. The ceiling was crosshatched with fake beams, with fluorescent-lighted frosted-glass panels in between, and there were a couple of real tree trunks rising from the floor to sprays of plastic leaves at the ceiling.... The back wall presented the largest mural of all and included such sites in Italy as the Colosseum, St. Peter's, the Duomo, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Grand Canal, and, in the center, an awkward rendition of Michelangelo's statue of David.... Popolizio pointed out that, unlike the original, David was wearing a fig leaf. 'He used to be *au naturel,*' Popolizio explained, 'but some of the members' wives complained.' "

Wally interpreted the objections to David's nudity as Italian modesty giving way to American prudery, but I think the readiness of those in charge to eliminate the cause of their wives' distress was one of those things that both Harris and I would have called, approvingly, very Italian. Tiro a Segno has always prided itself on being a place where entire families are comfortable—particularly on Sunday for lunch, when a table for four is practically the equivalent of eating alone. My own wife, who had never before, to my knowledge, said a kind word about a club, loved Tiro a Segno from the start. *The Tiro permits a small number of* non-Italian associate members, and I think that if membership had not been limited to males she might have begun some subtle angling for one of the slots. As it was, she asked Wally at lunch one day what would happen if, speaking strictly hypothetically, people who were close friends of a member found

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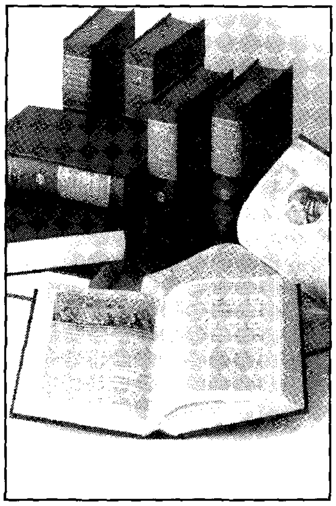

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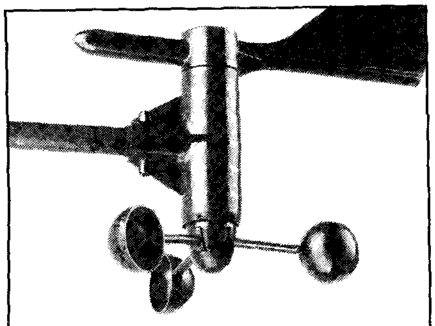

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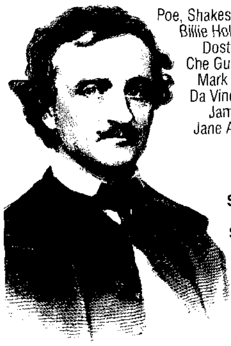

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themselves someday in need of a place to hold a wedding reception.

"Consider it done," Wally said.

This fall, after not having gone to the Tiro with Wally Popolizio for a while, I walked over to have lunch with another member I know—Joseph D'Angelo, who is the president of King Features, a newspaper syndicate I do some work for. When I walked into the club, I was startled. It had been completely transformed. I thought I remembered the bar, just inside the door, as having red flocked wallpaper. The walls of the bar where I met Joe D'Angelo were of a light-colored wood, which I learned was stained Honduran mahogany. The dining room was done in the same wood. The chairs, which I remembered as being high-backed and covered with some sort of red material with tassels, had been replaced with smaller, wooden chairs, whose backs and seats were upholstered in a restrained print. The lighting was recessed. The mural that showed Pompeii and David and the Bay of Naples was gone. To me the Tiro looked something like the businessmen's luncheon clubs that are sometimes found occupying an entire floor of a high-rise office building in large American cities. If you had to describe the total effect in one word, "understated" might come to mind.

"How do you like it?" Joe asked.

"It's very attractive," I said. "But it doesn't look very—well, Italian. I have to say that I'm not sure how I feel about that."

Joe introduced me to Peter Striano, who was then the president of the club, and who happens to be a neighbor of his on Long Island. I told Striano that, as elegant as the new décor was, I thought my wife and I might have to call a family meeting about the wedding reception we had spoken to Wally Popolizio about holding at the club someday. Striano said he didn't think that Wally was still a member of the club. It became apparent that a number of members had left the Tiro because of the renovation. I had a feeling that I had happened upon an issue in Tiro a Segno even more contentious than the attempt to insinuate peanuts into the nut cups.

WALLY, it turned out, had indeed resigned from the Tiro, but not because of the renovation—although at one meeting on the subject he had made

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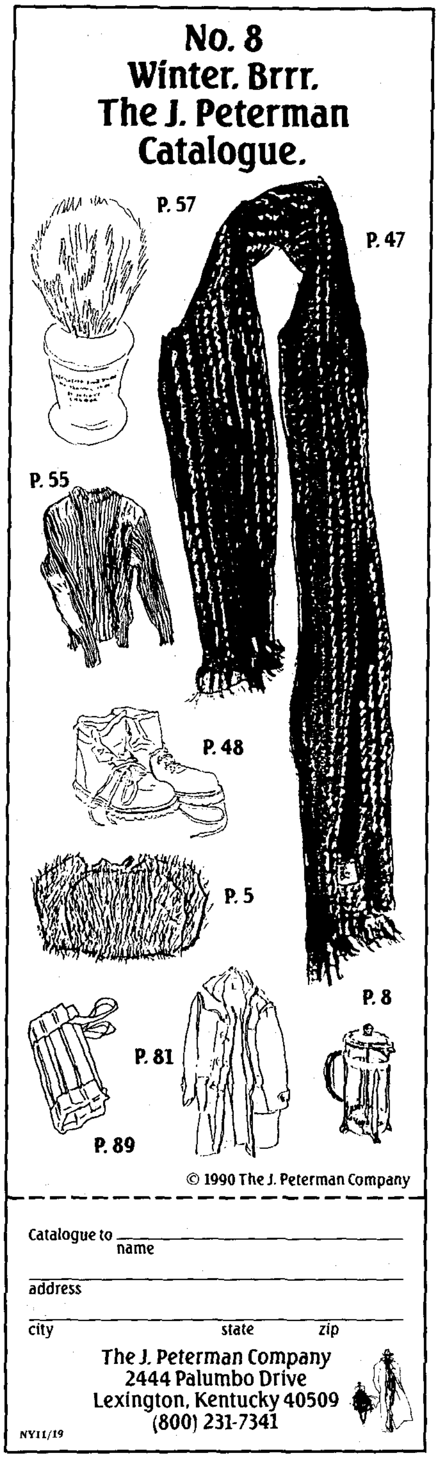
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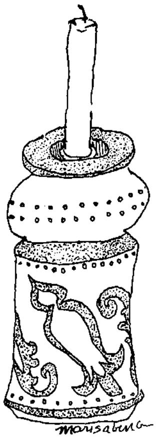
a speech about the danger of the club's losing its ambience, and he acknowledged that he might have used the phrase "Queens night club" in describing the sort of look the renovators seemed to have in mind. He had resigned because a few years ago high officials in the city government resigned from clubs that did not have women members—even clubs like Tiro a Segno, which kept their membership below the four-hundred-person minimum of clubs covered by an antidiscrimination ordinance passed around that time. (The Tiro has never prohibited female guests, and it almost goes without saying that the widow of a member is welcome to continue using the club if she wants to keep up her husband's membership.) Dozens of members, though, had left the Tiro over the renovation issue—either because they resigned or because they were ejected for refusing to make a four-thousand-dollar interest-free loan required from each member to cover the costs. Some of them had joined three former Tiro presidents in a lawsuit contesting the ejections, on the ground that a change in the bylaws which was required for imposing the interest-free loan was passed without a proper quorum. The current administration says that Tiro lost fifty-five members over the renovation controversy, and the most vocal opponents say that the number is a hundred and seventy-five—a spread that provides some indication of how closely the two sides are communicating these days. Strong words had been used. In letters that flew back and forth at the height of the controversy opponents of the renovation talked about the club's being run in a manner "more suitable to a kindergarten." Criticizing any number of decisions and business practices connected with the renovation, opponents tended toward language like "a brutal attempt at intimidation" or "a monstrous attempt at a near-extortion." The club administration, in reply, referred to the opponents as "the Poison Pen Group." In meetings, people lost their tempers, and even those who apologized did not sound terribly apologetic. "When I find myself ignoring the norms of civilized behavior and engaging in what amounts to a street brawl on their level," an opponent of the renovation wrote in a letter to a board member, "I am horrified that I allowed myself to be provoked to that extent."



It is not unheard of for a midtown club to be renovated or rebuilt to less than universal applause, although what the disapproving members do is usually described as grumbling. ("Old Thatcher says the place looks like a motel, and the new leather on the chairs creaks just as you fall asleep.") That sort of thing happened at the Princeton Club in the early sixties. Even among those overwhelmingly genteel New York men's clubs whose membership lists have a considerable overlap with the Social Register, it isn't unprecedented for a number of members to get mad enough to leave; the Union League Club, after all, was formed by men who broke away from the Union Club over the issues of the Civil War. But as I told my wife about the controversy at the Tiro, it occurred to me that having a proper knock-down-and-drag-out over the looks of the club fell into the category of what we would think of as "very Italian," and so did the depth of the feelings expressed. Southern Italy, where the families of most Tiro members came from, is not, after all, known as the land of quick forgiveness.

It also occurred to me that the renovation might be seen as a sort of transition rite—maybe inevitable, if painful—of the New York Italian community toward the mainstream. Without knowing much about how the decision came about, I thought I could understand arguments for either side. I could sympathize, for instance, with the feeling that the way the Tiro looked had a lot to do with the way it was—a warm, convivial, family sort of place, where people wandered a bit from table to table and enjoyed meals whose quality or quantity could have caused a member of the Union League Club to faint dead away. I could also see an argument for change. Most of the older members of Tiro a Segno presumably worked their way toward prosperity—in the law, say, or in the construction trades—at a time when an Italian name could place serious constraints on someone's professional mobility. Their sons might well work in mixed law firms or brokerage houses. I know that Italians have always been sensitive about what an Italian-American friend of mine calls "the 'Life with Luigi' image"—the stereotype of Italians as the quaint folks who run the checked-tablecloth restaurant and can't quite master English in the way it is spoken by people one takes seriously. Why should a thirty-two-year-old Italian-American investment banker who wants to bring his Wasp colleagues to the club that he and his father belong to be stuck with my version of what seems "very Italian"?

THE second floor of Tiro a Segno, like the first, has been done in light mahogany. The wide staircase in between has been decorated with some stark black-and-white photographs of street life in Italy. One afternoon, not long after my lunch with Joe D'Angelo, Peter Striano showed me around upstairs. The renovated cardroom is dedicated to the late Leone J. Peters, chief executive officer of the huge real-estate firm of Cushman & Wakefield, who logged many hours in Tiro card games. I had heard that Peters was a man not known for his patience, and I was pleased to see that what his family and the club had agreed to put on the plaque honoring him was not some testimonial-banquet piety but a quotation that apparently conjures up his presence for Tiro members who used to spend time at the card table with him: "Now cut the crap, and let's play cards."

In the boardroom, where Striano and I sat down for a chat about the renovation, the walls were covered with club photographs of some of the shooting teams at live-pigeon competitions in the fifties, and of the Tiro's annual banquet, which in recent years has been held at the Plaza and built around the club's charitable activities. Striano is a thickset, direct man in his fifties. He was born in Queens and worked his way up in the electrical-contracting business—general superintendent, project manager, and, eventually, in 1972, his own electrical-contracting firm. Since becoming president of the Tiro, he had been spending less time at the firm than he liked to. There was the renovation itself, of course, and dealing with the controversy. Then, because the staff had dispersed while the kitchen was closed for construction, Striano had to build a new staff from scratch—no small task at a club whose members have strong opinions about food and are not shy about making those opinions known. As it happens, interviewing chefs is not completely out of Striano's line: he is a serious weekend cook. From what I'd heard from Joe D'Angelo, guests who finally pushed back from Striano's table on a Saturday night might wonder why he had been wasting his time in electrical contracting.

In 1980, Striano told me, he had a sort of trial run for the Tiro renovation: he became the president of a neighborhood country club on Long Island where a deteriorating swimming pool and pump house made repairs imperative. Considerable opposition developed to the scale of what was contemplated and to the necessity of requiring each family to put up a bond for the project. Opposition to a patio that was included in the renovation plans was particularly bitter among families that lived on the perimeter of the club grounds—opponents who became known as the perimeter peo-

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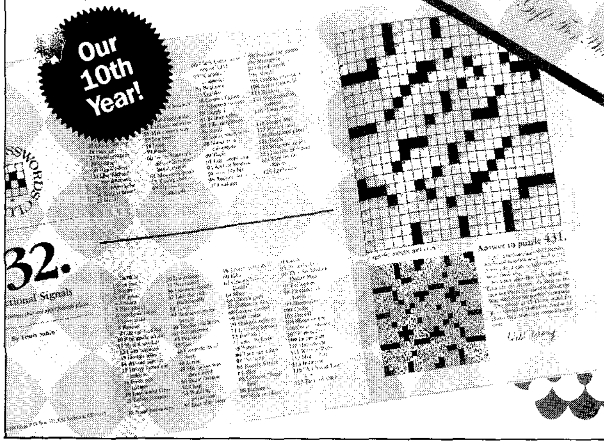

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ple. Striano pushed ahead. Years ago, he told me, an older businessman he admired told him that when something had to be done and you believed it to be the right thing you simply had to bull ahead, and worry about the criticism after the job was done. Eventually, the country-club renovations were made, Striano told me, and everyone seemed happy. I knew that Striano had taken over at Tiro a Segno in remarkably similar circumstances—that, whatever differences may have existed about the scale of the renovation and the method of financing it, there was general agreement that the building was badly in need of repair. Why didn't everyone at Tiro seem happy?

Although Striano thought that some of the older members might have been reluctant to put up the four thousand dollars, he saw the issue as less about money than about what amounted to proprietorship. "I'm sure the old-timers' intentions were as pure as ours," he said. "They saw young fellows get hold of this thing that was theirs and turn it into something else. They were saying 'This is our place.' " Striano said that the Italian culture reflected in the club was important to him, and that older members were an important part of that culture. ("The Tiro is like a root that goes back to the past.") He acknowledged, though, that he had found them difficult to deal with. He had previously told me of a time when he thought he had explained every facet of the financing to them—that it was a bond rather than an assessment, that people for whom the bond would be a financial strain could make special arrangements—and then discovered that his explanation had been considered disrespectful and had made them angrier than ever. Trying to explain it all to me, Striano had said, "It's the Italian thing."

I FOUND that people on both sides commonly refer to those who have opposed the renovation as "the old-timers." A number of older members, including Ted Reali, the son of one of the founders, supported the renovation and remain active in Tiro a Segno. The people who have protested the renovation are not all old. Still, there is a generational ring to the controversy, underlined by the tendency of some old-timers to refer now and then to the current rulers of the Tiro as "newcomers" or "Johnny-come-latelies." The youngest of the former presidents involved in the lawsuit—Thomas Zito, who taught economics at Rutgers for years and is now a housing consultant—is in his late seventies. The two others are both in their eighties—Dr. Anthony Mecca, who began teaching maxillofacial surgery at the New York University College of Dentistry in 1927, and Charles Rossotti, who is often spoken of by Tiro members as the man who invented the cellophane window on the Ronzoni pasta box. Anthony Mecca met the Rossotti brothers—Charles Rossotti and his brother Alfred, who died several years ago—when they were all teen-agers, part of a loose group of young Italians from the Village who were attending college. Mecca's father, who had gone to school in Naples to learn pastry baking, came to New York in the great wave of Italian immigration around 1900, and settled in lower Manhattan. He became "the pastry king of his time," Mecca says, and he apparently had high aspirations for his children. One of Anthony Mecca's brothers was a doctor. A sister was a lawyer. In 1925, the Meccas moved to a house in the Village that Anthony Mecca still occupies, and not long after my tour of the renovated Tiro I walked over to have a talk with him and Charles Rossotti.

The Rossottis grew up on King Street, the sons of a lithographer who came to New York from Milan in 1881 and eventually began producing packages for dry foods. Charles Rossotti did indeed develop a cellophane window for Mr. Ronzoni, who wanted shoppers to see his macaroni but detested the all-cellophane packages that could not be neatly stacked in a way that presented the Ronzoni name squarely to the world over and over again. The elder Rossotti was a member of Tiro a Segno almost from its founding; Charles Rossotti remembers taking evening strolls in the Village with his father, early in the century, and dropping into whichever rental quarters the Tiro was occupying before the first of the Macdougal Street buildings was finally bought, in the twenties. "My father had his heart in the club," Rossotti told me. "His life was built around the club." As Charles Rossotti got older, he used to drive his father to shoots—particularly to the live-pigeon competitions in the Pocono Mountains. "When you have a club, you have to have some reason to get together," Rossotti said. "The inducement in those days was that a lot of Italians liked to go hunting and fishing. The club was built around a bunch of old Italian hunters. Memorial Day, Labor Day, the Fourth of July, the club would have three-day outings. We'd stay in Italian boarding houses. That was the heart of the real Tiro a Segno." There was at least one more strong generation of shooters in the club, including Alfred Rossotti, who was as enamored of the live-pigeon competitions as his father had been. "Sometimes," Charles Rossotti said with a smile, "Alfred seemed more interested in pigeons than in macaroni packages."

I didn't find it difficult to understand why people like Charles Rossotti and Anthony Mecca might consider Tiro a Segno their place. When the Rossotti brothers and Mecca joined the club, more than fifty years ago, it was nearly dormant—partly because of the Depression, partly because the members of the founding generation were elderly or dead. The three young men tried to put new life into the Tiro. In time, they established a regular dining room—there had been only a snack bar for the cardplayers—and hired the legendary Manfredi. They managed to retire the mortgages—partly, Rossotti said, by persuading the mortgage holders that partial payment was preferable to foreclosing on a building nobody particularly wanted. "We were the first new generation," Rossotti told me. "Until my presidency, the minutes were in Italian. We changed the minutes. We changed the stationery to English. We brought in our contemporaries." The financial difficulties of the Depression were followed by the political difficulties of the Second World War. In the late thirties, it was no secret that Mussolini had a great deal of support in the New York Italian community. "Numerous investigations were conducted at the Club, and all the members, by Government agencies, including the F.B.I.," Rossotti once wrote in an informal account of his Tiro activities, "but the Administration of the Club stood its ground and came out with a clean bill of health in each and every instance. At no time were the activities of the Club suspended nor the Club closed."

Rossotti seemed to feel that what the Depression and the Second World War were unable to do had been accomplished by the club's new administration—in effect, the end of Tiro a Segno. "There's no club," he said. "It's a restaurant now." In their time at the Tiro, Anthony Mecca and Charles Rossotti had been through more than one renovation. The dining room I was familiar with had come in two stages. A boccie court in the back yard was sacrificed for the first. The second, in the late fifties, swallowed up a *terrazzo* and produced the mural that had struck Richard Harris and many other visitors as the dominant feature of the room. Those changes, of course, had been rather modest, and Rossotti said he would have preferred a modest renovation this time around, as well. What seemed to trouble him most, though, was not the scale of the renovation. "They didn't know how to treat the members," he said. "You've got to know how to treat people." Neither Rossotti nor Mecca had mentioned the change in the appearance of the clubhouse. I was interested in knowing what they thought of the results of the renovation. I wanted to know if the club as it now is seems to them less Italian. They couldn't tell me. They hadn't set foot in Tiro a Segno since the construction began.

I TALKED to a number of other members and ex-members of the Tiro, usually at mealtime. I had a lot of calamari. I had a lot of pasta e fagioli. Once or twice, I was tempted to loosen my tie at the collar. I had dinner with Tom Zito at a restaurant rather than a club, but he has in fact formed a new club, in New Jersey, called Trenta Amici—a club, he told me, that has the great advantage of meeting in the private room of a restaurant instead of maintaining a clubhouse. I had dinner with some other former Tiro members at an Italian club called the Progressive Era Association, just off Washington Square, where Spanish music wafted out of the kitchen along with the aroma of tomato sauce, and only one other table was occupied. The Progressive Era Association, which is in one brownstone rather than three, is thought of as perhaps a notch down in social prestige from the Tiro, but there has always been some overlapping membership. Wally Popolizio once rounded up some downtown Italians and had a dinner for Ed Koch

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at Progressive Era to counter accusations by J. Raymond (the Fox) Jones, the Harlem Democratic leader, that Koch's stand on some redistricting made him anti-Italian. At our table, talk of the old days at Progressive Era inspired talk of the old days at the Tiro, when dinner cost a dollar and a quarter, and for an extra dollar you could get a good bottle of Italian wine. The waiter at Progressive Era brought around a menu board, as Manfredi had done at Tiro a Segno. The Tiro still uses a board, but a waiter wheels it over in a sort of cabinet made of mahogany that matches the walls.

The people I talked to who had left the Tiro because of the renovation all emphasized that they had been in favor of making whatever repairs the clubhouse needed. What they had objected to was the scale of the project. They said the method of financing it was unfair. ("How do you equate a man of eighty-five paying four thousand dollars with a man of forty-five paying four thousand dollars?") They maintained that club approval had been railroaded through against the desires of the majority. They said again and again that there had been something ugly and insulting about the way opposition was brushed aside and members were told to put up four thousand dollars or leave the club. In the view of one former member, the attitude of the club administration was "If you don't like it, the door's open. We can always get two hundred new members." Tom Zito did mention the look of the old club—"When you walked in that door, we wanted you to know you were in an Italian club," he told me, "and most of the members opposed making it into an English drawing room"—but nobody seemed to dwell on the change in appearance that I had found so dramatic.

I got the impression that those who had left the club considered their separation permanent. The protesters had lost their lawsuit. The decision seemed to reflect the trial judge's belief that the meeting in question had been packed by the administration, as such meetings so often are ("Members were called to come to the clubhouse and, in fact, one member's limo was dispatched to pick up other members and bring them in"), but he found the quorum that was produced legal. In talking to those who had backed the suit, I couldn't detect any great enthusiasm for mounting an appeal. The Tiro does have a lot of new members to replace those who have left—so many, exiles say, that it is now a different club ("They should change the name") or, as Rossotti had put it, not a club at all. The former members I spoke to hadn't visited the renovated clubhouse, but a number of them told me that what they had heard about the food produced by the new staff was not encouraging. In Tiro terms, it seemed to me, that was the ultimate way to wash your hands of a place: Tiro a Segno, they were saying, was not only a restaurant rather than a club—it was not even a particularly distinguished restaurant.

I HADN'T anticipated discussing the Tiro-renovation controversy north of Fourteenth Street, but one afternoon I found myself on East Sixty-ninth Street, in a block of old mansions just off Fifth Avenue, to have lunch at the Columbus Citizens Foundation. Among Italian clubs in New York, the Columbus may be the most notable—although a dyed-in-the-wool Tiro man might argue that it was too much the creature of one man, the late S. Samuel DiFalco, who as a judge of the surrogate court had enormous patronage power. Some people belong to both the Columbus and the Tiro—including Joe D'Angelo. The Columbus certainly has the most impressive structure of any Italian club—a rococo mansion whose previous owner was the Consulate of Sweden. The second floor has huge hand-carved fireplaces and bas-relief moldings. The dining room is in the basement, and, to my surprise, it had some touches that reminded me of the old Tiro a Segno. The floor is of a sort of speckled granite, and the chairs have red tassels on them. On the wall across from our table was a large painting of what might very well have been the Bay of Naples. My host at lunch was Domenick G. Scaglione, a business consultant, who came to this country as a teen-ager from rural Italy and worked his way up to vice-president of the Chase Manhattan Bank in charge of corporate relations for Southern Europe.

Scaglione said that at one point he had tried to mediate the controversy at the Tiro but had eventually left the club. He told me that he hadn't been troubled by the raucousness of the disagreement ("It's in our character to be boisterous and outspoken"), but had come to feel that the renovation was

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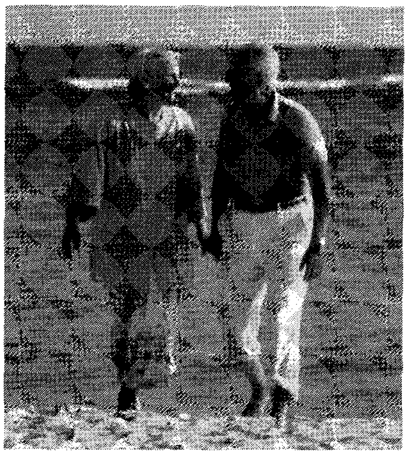

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going to be done no matter what was said. When I asked him how he felt about the look of the clubhouse, he said that, as it happened, he had liked the way the old Tiro looked. He had even liked the mural. "Most of the supporters of the club were attached to an image that was given us," he said. "If we are there to preserve the heritage, what we preserve is not only in the spirit—the most important to me—but physically. To look at Naples, to look at Vesuvius, to look at where their ancestors came from. To be vociferous at table." Scaglione told me that when he read the original bylaws in Italian—they exhorted members to be proud Americans and proud of their Italian heritage, and to excel in sportsmanship and philanthropy—he had wept. The club, he said, had drifted away from its original purpose. "I don't attribute malice, but they got away from principles to make something to suit the needs of the very few," he said. "They wanted to 'bring the club into the twentieth century.' But the moment you renege on where you came from, you're creating something else. The moment you do that, you have a beautiful statue with no pedestal."

The waiter brought us a menu board, and we ordered a few courses. I had the calamari. As we left the dining room after lunch, I noticed some architects' renderings in the foyer. The Columbus Citizens Foundation is planning a renovation.

"BUT why?" I would ask the exiles. Why were those who now run the Tiro so intent on renovating the clubhouse to just that degree and in just that way? "They wanted to make big shots out of themselves," one former member said. Someone else said, "They were on an ego trip." Someone else offered the theory that it was done because just about all the directors were in the construction trades and simply didn't know what to do except construct. Construction people, of course, have the reputation of being more interested in getting the wall up than in considering the philosophical and political questions involved in deciding to build a wall, but the Tiro member who acted as the project manager for the renovation, Frank Puzio, does not fit that mold. He definitely has a background in the construction industry—he's a civil engineer who spent many years building up a large brick-and-mortar contracting business—but he seems to have given a lot of thought to every aspect of it, including various methods of mixing mortar. He has written a memoir, unpublished so far, about his life in the construction business; it's called "Mortar in My Blood."

Puzio is hardly someone who is unconcerned with Italian culture and tradition. "Mortar in My Blood" has warm portraits of his Italian grandparents, some of whom made it from a village below Naples to the Bronx by way of Brazil, and it's sprinkled with Italian folk phrases. The book he always wanted to write, he says in the introduction, is a book called "Neapolitan Gestures and Gesticulations." Puzio was born in New York, but, by his own count, he has been to Italy thirty-one times. On one of those trips he saw Donatello's statue of Mary Magdalene in the Baptistery in Florence, and he was entranced. Since then, he has built his trips to Italy around visits to places that have Donatello sculptures; he searches out

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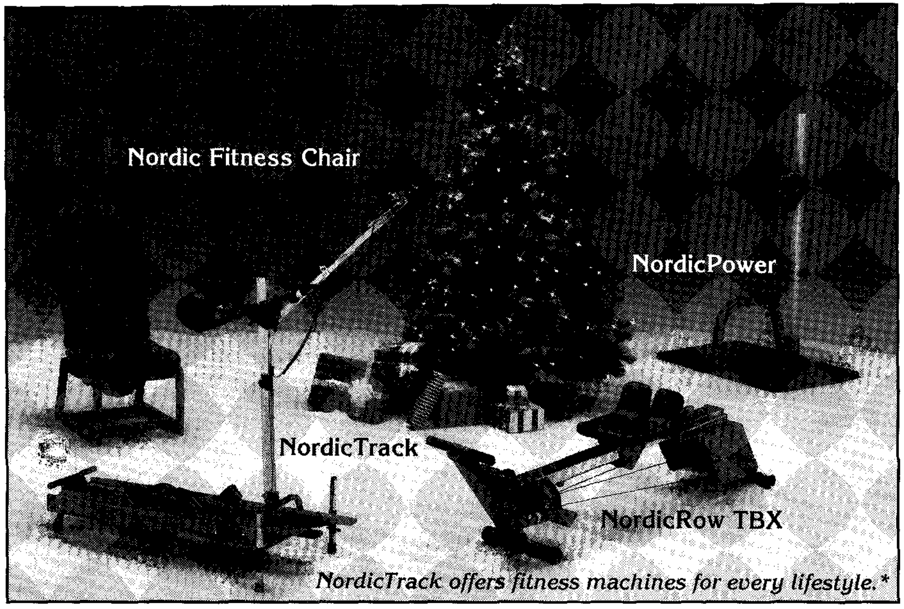

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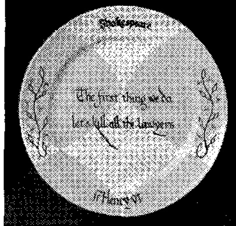

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the best local restaurant as a sort of sideline. He is involved in the Italian Historical Society and in the effort to get some recognition for Antonio Meucci, a man some Italians consider the true inventor of the telephone. Puzio grew up speaking the Neapolitan dialect his grandparents had used, and later learned standard Italian. "I'm an Italophile," he told me. "That's what interests me."

Puzio said that at one time he himself had supported an alternative renovation plan—a more modest plan that would have made some basic improvements in plumbing and wiring and kitchen facilities without seriously altering the look of the club. The problem, he said, was that such repairs would have altered the structure enough to require conformity to modern building codes throughout, leaving "almost a choice of nothing or all the way"—an interpretation of the building regulations that, it should be said, some of the old-timers disagree with.

"Does it still look Italian?" I asked Puzio.

"Of course," he said. "That's something we should fight to retain. We want to keep that Italian feeling. Many of us still speak Italian when we're there."

That's true. I had noticed that people who had given no indication of being able to speak the language often order in Italian when they're at the Tiro. Also, a member of the Tiro who runs into a friend at the club bar is likely to greet him with a kiss on the cheek—not the sort of thing ordinarily seen at a businessmen's luncheon club in Denver or Atlanta. A lot of people belong to the Tiro precisely because it is Italian. In the view of Puzio and the supporters of the renovation, the clubhouse is not what makes the Tiro Italian. "We should have no reason to act any differently in the new facilities than we did in the old," Paul Leone Peters, the son of the impatient cardplayer, wrote at the height of the controversy in the club newsletter, which Puzio now edits. "Just as I enjoyed feeling comfortable and 'at home' as a youngster growing up in the old clubhouse (the one before the silly murals), with its corrugated fibreglass panels and tacky décor, so I will feel at ease with my wife and children in our new, more luxurious surroundings. I will enjoy the more accommodating party rooms, the new card room, the beautiful dining room and the (finally!) convenient bathrooms. But, I will never feel uncomfortable about using the facilities, or about bringing the children, or my friends, or my friends' children—only proud. And if there is some concern that the new facilities are too elegant; too sophisticated; too expensive to really enjoy; then let me be the first to spill marinara sauce on the carpet; accidentally chip the wood panelling; splash soapy water on the marble vanities; or loudly urge my friends at the other table to try that special pasta on the menu."

On the other hand, Puzio told me, the club has changed with the times. In the early days, a lot of the members lived within walking distance. There was a strong connection with the neighborhood. Now the Tiro has many more members from the suburbs than from all of Manhattan. (In fact, the club leadership that carried out the renovation includes only one person who lives in Manhattan.) Saturday used to be a big day for lunch and cardplaying at Tiro. These days, a lot of members spend their Saturdays mowing their lawns or working on their golf game. The club doesn't serve lunch anymore on Saturdays. Puzio said that lately there had even been some resistance to the huge meals traditionally served at the Tiro. "Some people think we should have a modified menu," he said.

"A modified menu!"

"That's right."

"Well, it's not my club," I said. "But I think that might be going too far."

Wally Popolizio finally had a look at the renovated Tiro a Segno, and I dropped by the headquarters of the Housing Authority, in a high rise on lower Broadway, to get the verdict. As the chairman, Wally had a large corner office. One of his daughters now has the model of the ice [illegible]rt, but Wally has picked up some other souvenirs since those days on Eighth Street. On one wall, not far from some pictures and trophies from Housing Authority sports programs, were a few letters from Prince Charles. Wally and the Prince, who has a strong interest in community housing, got acquainted during a trip Wally made to England for a conference. After their chat, which went on for twice the time allotted in the palace schedule, Wally presented him with four New York Housing Authority Tenant Patrol jackets—an extra-large for the Prince, a large for Princess Diana, and two smalls for the kids—and said, “I wouldn’t wear them when you go to your mother’s.” Wally later found out that the presentation was not made strictly according to protocol—for one thing, the Queen is not ordinarily referred to as “your mother”—but Prince Charles didn’t seem to mind. Wally said that when he left he shook the Prince’s hand and said, “I came here to meet the Prince of Wales, but I met a hell of a nice guy.” Since then, Wally and the Prince have, through the mails, become what I think can be best described as pals. Prince Charles is the sort of dignitary Wally would have hoped to take to the Tiro for lunch in the old days. I recalled that when the late A. Bartlett Giamatti was appointed president of Yale, Wally was so proud of having an Italian in that post that he wrote to Giamatti to extend a standing lunch invitation.

“Well, where would you take the Prince if he comes over?” I asked. “Now that you’re no longer in the Tiro?”

Wally had already thought about that, and decided on Da Silvano, a restaurant on lower Sixth Avenue, around the corner from the Tiro clubhouse. It would never occur to Wally to take the Prince uptown.

“What did you think of the new Tiro?” I asked. “You have to admit that it doesn’t look like a Queens night club.”

He agreed that it could be described as resembling a businessmen’s luncheon club in some large American city, although the way he put it was “It’s as if someone makes a lot of money and hires a modern decorator who takes the mother’s portrait off the wall and throws it under the bed and puts up pictures of tomato cans on a white background.”

“I take it that means that you don’t like it,” I said.

“The old club was not a businessmen’s club,” Wally said. “It wasn’t a place where you hustled someone for business. It was accented toward the members and their families. It came out of the members’ idea of what Italian elegance is. You step out of the harsh world of New York City into a world of values that are unspoken but known to everyone. They begin and end with family, friends, food, and festivities. It was a place where younger people

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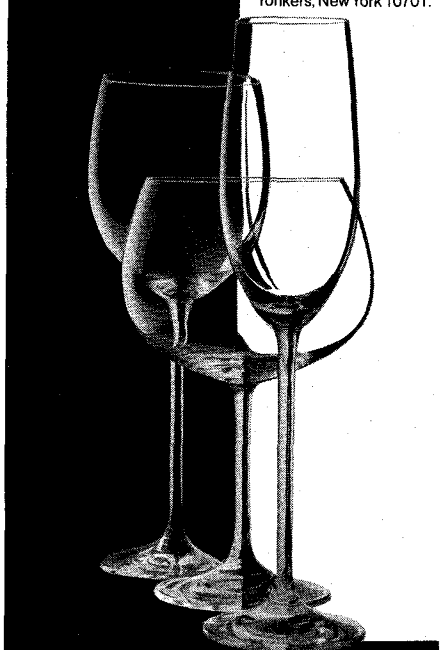

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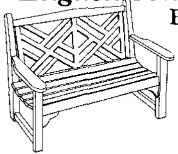

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wanted to be included. They didn't think of older people as old fogies. Now it's a slick, up-to-date businessmen's club. There's no warmth. They took away the beautiful decadence you cannot manufacture—it just comes to pass."

I told Wally that my original assumption about what caused the renovation controversy—the assumption that the interior decoration of the Tiro had been caught in the classic American struggle between ethnic tradition and the pull of the mainstream—seemed to have been dead wrong. I don't think many people chose sides *according to how they felt about the* mural of the Bay of Naples. Even Domenick Scaglione, who was fond of the old décor, had said of the renovation, "There would have been no resentment if it had been done as a family." From what I could see, important issues of money and control were involved; maybe the Tiro would have had a proper knock-down-and-drag-out over the renovation even if it had been "done as a family." Still, it may be that the advice Peter Striano was given about letting the chips fall where they may—probably pretty good advice in general, and advice that had apparently stood him in good stead in dealing with the perimeter people—had not taken into account "the Italian thing." Or maybe some members just didn't want to pay the four thousand dollars and preferred to think of their refusing to pay as based on noble Italian reasons. I'm not sure. Being soft on Italians doesn't mean you understand Italians.

Wally did not underestimate the role of the Italian thing. He said that in his opinion the split with the old-timers who led the opposition was permanent. "Their honor has been irreparably damaged," he said. Rather to my surprise, though, he said he thought some people would eventually want to be back in the club. He sounded as if he wouldn't mind being back in the club himself if he weren't in public office—which means, I suppose, that Prince Charles still has a chance for lunch. "There's a lot of nostalgia there," Wally said. "It's an important tradition." He paused for a few moments. Then he said, "When you went in there, you were safe, you were secure. That big wooden door was like a moat. Nobody could bother you. And don't forget—you were royal."

—CALVIN TRILLIN

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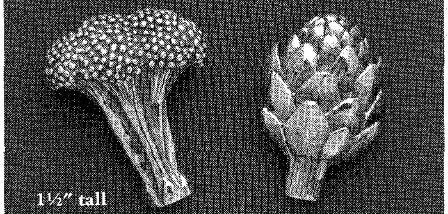

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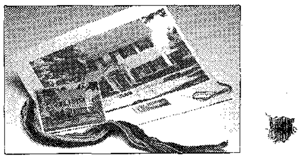

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THE THEATRE

Clean

AT the opening of Philip Kan Gotanda's "The Wash," at Manhattan Theatre Club, an elderly Japanese man in an armchair is napping behind a newspaper. Scattered around the chair are rumpled shirts. He awakens, goes over to a stove, takes a couple of frankfurters out of a pot of boiling water, puts them on a plate, and, with chopsticks, mixes mustard and soy sauce to go with them. He then pours the water into a teapot. (Audience gasps.) His wife enters, carrying a large paper bag; she picks up the shirts from the floor, puts them in the bag, and replaces them with a stack of clean ones. He pours her a cup of tea; she sips and grimaces. "Hot-dog water," he says. The scene, seemingly trivial, is indicative. "The Wash" is a modest play about Japanese-Americans in San Jose, California, which, in its delicacy and strength and truthfulness, is more likely to linger in the memory than other, more rackety efforts.

The beginning is so casual that it takes quite a while to realize that a story is in progress; yet it is, in one small episode after another. Nobu Matsumoto and his wife, Masi, have separated after being married for forty years. She is determined to find some happiness; he is apparently just as determined to avoid it—or, at least, to avoid any effort or change. She meets an agreeable widower, emotional and sensitive, the very antithesis of her husband, and they fall in love. The proprietor of the restaurant where Nobu eats dinner every evening is obviously attracted to him, as he is to her, but he backs away, out of some mysterious stoicism, or perhaps not so mysterious: he is haunted by memories of the internment camp where he spent the war years. When his pretty younger daughter, who has married a black man, tries to show him her baby, he ducks; yet when she puts the child in his arms he lights up and, hugging it, sings a Japanese lullaby. Eventually, Masi asks for a divorce, and of course he refuses. When she attempts to justify herself to her daughters, telling them that he never comes near her, even in bed, they are squeamish and embarrassed. Incident follows incident—the incidents are the texture of the play—until Masi delivers the clean shirts for the last time and leaves the dirty ones on the floor.

"The Wash," so entertaining and modest and trustworthy, opens up a whole world to many of us, and could well become a classic. In the performance, under Sharon Ott's direction, each moment is made clear. The acting is admirable. Sab Shimono makes indelible the husband in all his complexity, and Nobu McCarthy is charming and more than that as his glowing, rebellious wife. Diane Takei and Jodi Long are their troubled daughters; George Takei is the wife's suitor; Shizuko Hoshi is the restaurant proprietor; and Carol Honda and Marshall Factora are a pair of chubby, amusing steady customers. The all-purpose setting was designed by James Youmans and lighted by Dan Kotlowitz; the costumes were designed by Lydia Tanji. "The Wash" will run only through November 18th. —EDITH OLIVER

The Day the Music Died

ON February 3, 1959, Buddy Holly died in the same plane crash that killed Ritchie Valens and J. P. Richardson, otherwise known as the Big Bopper, and yet rock and roll lives on. That, at any rate, is the moral of "Buddy," the docu-musical that just flew into the Shubert. People committed to this proposition had probably better steer clear of the show: it would only disillusion them.

"Buddy," which opened November 4th and features Paul Hipp in the title role, is the first embarrassing musical of the season, and that's too bad, because it might have been fun. Buddy Holly was no genius; he didn't reinvent pop music (the way, I've heard it argued, Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis did), and doesn't really represent anything (other than tragic early death). But he wrote some good tunes, and he had a certain inimitable style.

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Unfortunately, Mr. Hipp is not capable of putting over either the songs or the style. Where Holly had a sort of geeky innocence, Mr. Hipp has only geekiness, which in stage terms translates into a monumental lack of presence. Moreover, Mr. Hipp's vocal range is such that he has to sing all the high bits a sixth or so below.

The show, which is a London import—Mr. Hipp is reprising the performance he originated in the West End—is subtitled "The Buddy Holly Story," and the story it tells is not substantially different from the 1978 film of the same name, except for being slightly less sophisticated. The first act is devoted to the rise of Buddy Holly and the Crickets—their transformation from promising country-and-Western trio into top-of-the-charts rock band. (There's a lot here about Holly's humble origins in Lubbock, Texas, and about his brothers in the tiling business, and even more about the villainy of country and Western versus the vitality of rock and roll.) Much of the second half consists of a simulation of the concert that took place the night before the fateful plane crash. (The ominous foreshadowings come thick and fast, and one longs for a machete.) What turns out to be unfortunate in the stage version is the way the story is used to suggest that Holly's music broke down racial barriers. This is particularly troublesome in the sequence in which the band, having been mistakenly booked into the Apollo Theatre, proceeds to win the heart of Harlem. Because Mr. Hipp isn't very good at what he's doing, and all the black members of the company have to look as though he were, the show ends up duplicating the way black culture has traditionally been coöpted by whites.

"Buddy" was directed by Rob Bettinson, designed by Andy Walmsley, lighted by Graham McLusky, and costumed by Bill Butler and Carolyn Smith. It has a book by Alan Janes and ghastly musical direction by Paul Jury (who manages to ruin some of the simplest orchestrations in musical history). It was co-produced by David Mirvish, of the Canadian Mirvishes, who own most of Toronto, including the Royal Alexandria Theatre, and also have interests in London, where the show evidently did well. This is no doubt a continuing sign of something, but I can't quite put my finger on what. —MIMI KRAMER

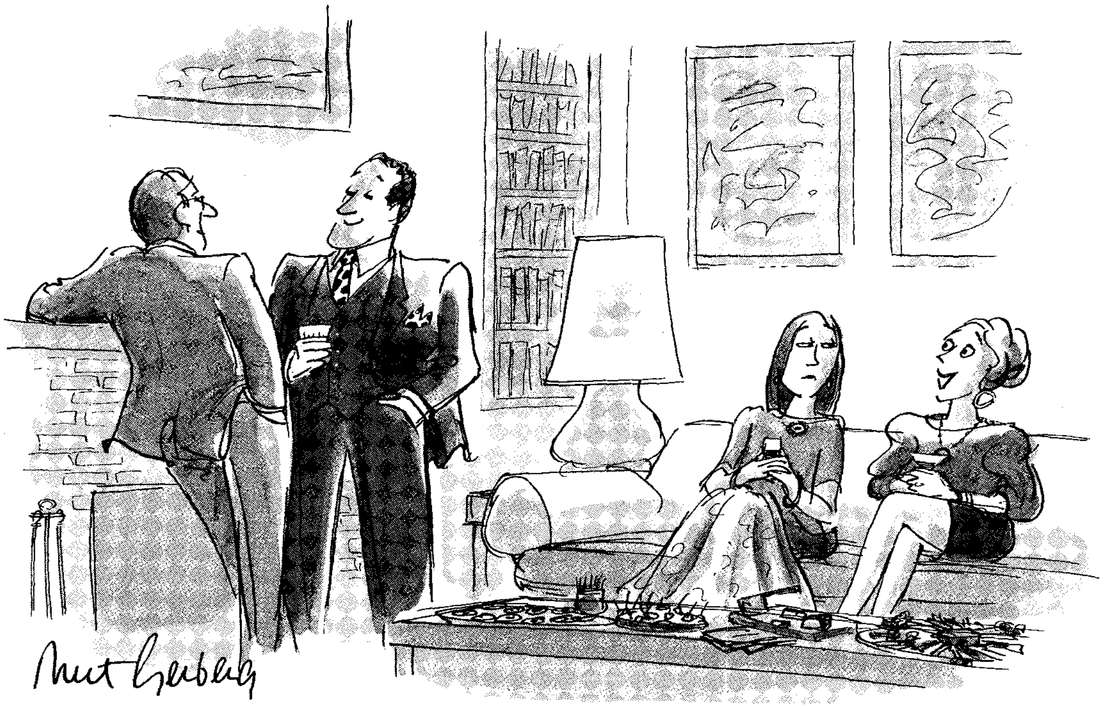
THE ART WORLD

Old Man Ryder

Americans, who like their writers lunging and garrulous, seem to prefer their painters solitary and ascetic. In the line of visionary grumps which includes Eakins and Pollock and Wyeth and Still, the archetype is the late-nineteenth-century landscape painter Albert Pinkham Ryder, who is the subject of two excellent new books and of a retrospective exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. Ryder is the legendary hermit-crank of American art. Marsden Hartley, who painted a portrait of Ryder after his death that made him look like a cross between Santa Claus and a Greek Orthodox patriarch, once numbered him "among the first citizens of the moon." Ryder liked to paint night scenes on cigar-box lids, and once sawed up the mahogany headboard of his bed to paint on when he ran out of canvas. Nonetheless, he was the only American hung alongside Gauguin and Cézanne in the section of the 1913 Armory Show given over to the precursors of modern painting. In a review of the Armory Show the critic Charles Caffin wrote of "old man Ryder" that "in his unobtrusive sincerity he, in fact, anticipated that abstract expression toward which painting is returning"—the first time, perhaps, that those two potent words had ever been aligned.

A first encounter with Ryder's pictures in the dimly lit blue-gray rooms of the Brooklyn exhibition seems to confirm his place as an American backwoods Blake. Ryder's pictures are mostly dark and small and crusty. Though they are "painterly," they don't look like the work of a virtuoso; their amber- and putty-colored surfaces appear just to have spread across the canvas, like moss. ("I have been working to get my paint less painty looking than any man who went before me," he once said.) His pictures are secretive; you peer into them, searching for the whales or the kings or the Shakespearean characters that the titles promise. Ryder's repeated themes—a sailboat by moonlight, a meeting in the woods between two archaically dressed figures—have less the folk-song simplicity of "naïve" painting than the cultish recessiveness of medieval art. Even the leaflike patterns of webs and cracks and fissures and crackles which now cover almost all his pictures (and have destroyed more than a few) seem like a purposeful glaze of unworldliness. (He made up his own techniques as he went along, and this has left his pictures full of technical and chemical weaknesses that conservators refer to by the wonderful name of "inherent vice.")

Ryder's life, as it has been recorded in a new biography, by William Innes Homer and Lloyd Goodrich, and in the exhibition catalogue, by Elizabeth Broun, turns out to be more cosmopolitan than the legend allows. He was a New Yorker, and spent most of his life in little rooms in downtown Manhattan: at Canal and Broadway; at the Benedick Hotel, near Washington Square; and then, for twelve-odd years, at 305 West Fifteenth Street. The moonlight that shines in the coves and channels of his marine nocturnes is the moonlight that he sketched shining over the warehouses on Eighth Avenue, or over the Battery, where he loved to walk at night. He was the most relentlessly literary painter of his day, in Europe or America. Besides Shakespeare and the Bible, his sources include Chaucer, Spenser, Sterne, Thomas Moore's "Lalla Rookh," Wagner, and Heine; he must be the only nineteenth-century painter to have based a picture on a poem by the obscure Elizabethan Michael Drayton. (He wrote a lot of poetry himself, most of it pretty bad, and based pictures on it, too.) Ryder had less experience of the American backwoods than of the fogs and mists of mid-nineteenth-century French painting, whose effects—the long bare horizons, the twilight silhouettes, the golden afterglows—he absorbed voraciously and then offered up in his pictures with a slightly schematized, provincial excitement. He was not a backcountry absolutist at all but a go-between, reconciling the warring conventional elements of the metropolitan art of his day—bringing together, for instance, the peasant forthrightness of Barbizon-school painting with the Gilded Age taste for the enamelled and exquisite. In the end, he became to European symbolism something like what Joseph Cornell became to European Surrealism: an echo-catcher—an assembler of little reli-



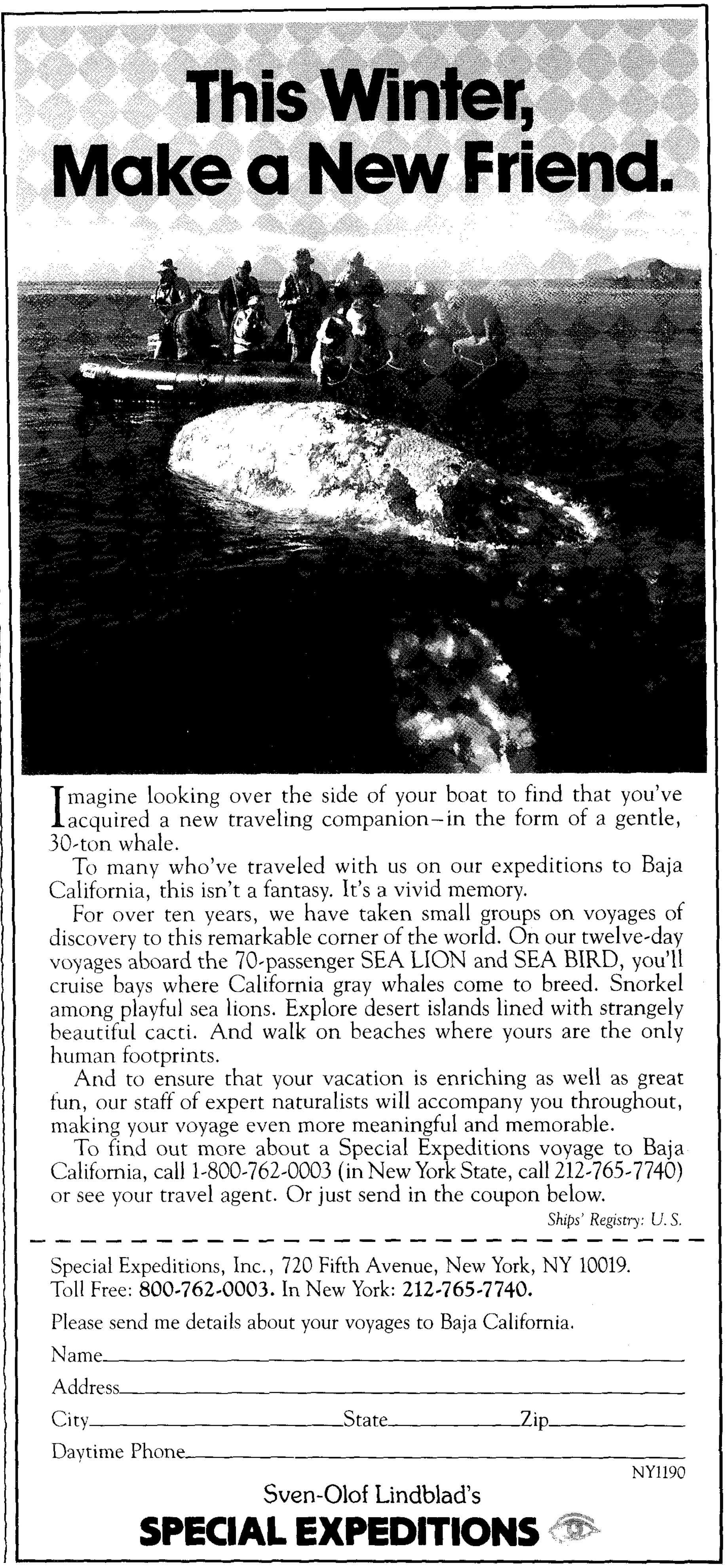
"Arthur and I have been together now for four and a half years, which is a personal best for both of us."

quaries of secondhand styles that, in their miniaturized intensity, could later become the seedbed for something truly American and new.

RYDER was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1847—at a time when New Bedford was still the world's whaling capital. Pinkham was his mother's family name, and all his life he liked to be called Pinkie. He apparently never took formal art lessons. But when Ryder was a boy his brother gave him a magazine of reproductions of pictures in the Louvre, and a little while after that his father gave him a paintbox and brushes. "When my father placed a box of colors and brushes in my hands, and I stood before my easel with its square of stretched canvas, I realized that I had in my possession the wherewithal to create a masterpiece that would live through the coming ages. The great masters had no more," Ryder recalled. For him, there were no intermediate steps —no craft, no accumulated traditions —standing between a boy with a paintbox in New Bedford and the Louvre. Ryder never really learned to draw, or even how to apply colors so that they stayed put—in fact, his pictures started coming apart in his lifetime—but he didn't reject inherited technique, exactly; he just seems not to have understood why anybody needed it.

Ryder's earliest pictures, as far as one can tell (he loved to repaint old work, so his dates are muddled), are of local horses and cows done in the seventeenth-century Dutch manner. His family owned a white horse named Charley, whom he apparently thought of as divine—in his later paintings Charley appears as Pegasus—and in a good early picture called "In the Stable" the horse appears in his stall, dressed up in a mahogany-and-red-and-cream color scheme picked up from a Rembrandt. Ryder rejected the classical style of horse drawing (not knowing the conventional shortcuts, he didn't know the stereotypes, either), with its focus on the animal's neck and head. Instead, Ryder makes Charley's head disappear, as he folds the horse in recessively, so that Charley becomes a sheet of white cloth, like a sail.

Ryder and his parents moved to New York around 1868, and he started to look at the Barbizon-school painting of the decade before. His models were Millet and Corot, whose work he ab-



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sorbed both firsthand, through the collection of the dealer Daniel Cottier, and secondhand, through their influence on the American landscape painters John La Farge and George Inness. Ryder discovered Barbizon painting just as it was on its way out (he seems never to have known much about the Impressionists): the Corot he knew was the Vaseline-on-the-lens, silver-birch-and-pinup-nymph Corot; and he came to Millet when the rectitude of Millet's early work had settled into a conventionalized, hazy piety of noble silhouettes. But the mannerisms suited Ryder better than the original impulses might have. He took them and treated them not as truth-seeking records of light and soil but as fixed, manipulable elements. He wrote that once when he was struggling with a landscape he looked up and suddenly the scene "stood out like a painted canvas." He went on, "There was no detail to vex the eye. Three solid masses of form and color—sky, foliage, and earth—the whole bathed in an atmosphere of golden luminosity." Ryder liked nature best when it looked like a French picture, and he was honest enough to say so. His early landscapes are dreamlike because they convey patterns of sensation uprooted from the particulars of lived experience.

Ryder might have ended up as just a pasticheur had he not had the shrewd intuition that you could make something new of these secondhand formulas if you reduced them—made them into small, intense glazes. He saw that the effects of Millet and Corot, with *their absence of detail and their implicit* taste for abstract patterning, could be adapted to the needs of the exquisite Tiffany-lamp and Chinese-scroll aesthetic that had become the dominant taste in American art. All you had to do was work small. Ryder's early landscapes may be the tiniest pictures that had ever been exhibited as finished work in America. The best of them, "The Golden Hour," dating from the late eighteen-seventies, is only seven and a half inches by twelve and a half. (Around this time, too, Ryder seems to have begun deliberately experimenting with weird finishing methods, in part because he wanted to give his pictures the patina of Italian "primitive" religious panel painting. A Ryder is *meant* to be cracked; the process just got out of hand sometimes.)

Perhaps it isn't surprising that al-

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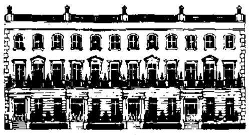

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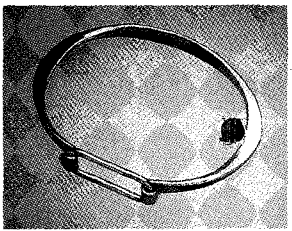

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most from the first exhibition of these little landscapes, in 1873, Ryder acquired a loyal following. Ryder's work had a ship-in-a-bottle, watchmaker's quality that appealed to a lot of Gilded Age millionaires; his early patrons admired Ryder's pictures not because they seemed boldly artless or untutored—that sense of Ryder as an innocent came much later—but because they seemed worked and enamelled and bejewelled. And many of Ryder's patrons were apparently drawn to his work because, although it was obviously art, it wasn't intimidating. You could admire Ryder without having to worship him. There's a funny series of letters to and about Ryder from the Montreal railroad millionaire Sir William Van Horne concerning a picture, called "Constance," that Van Horne had commissioned. "I hope he put some stuffing into Constance and braced her up a little," Van Horne wrote once. "She was dead as a mackerel when I saw her last."

BY the early to mid-eighties, when Ryder began painting his best and most famous pictures, he was almost too successful for his own good; his eccentricity and reclusiveness were chosen—even willed—elements in a slightly calculating shtick. His success, however, gave him the confidence to proceed to the kind of picture-making that, in his old-fashioned way, he still thought was the real high purpose of art: big (for him) pictures of literary and religious subjects. The pictures of moonlit skiffs which he began to make at the same time, and on which his reputation as a rural mystic depends, were a kind of sideline; they're haunting because they're so oddly casual and unforced. Clement Greenberg once made the perceptive observation that Ryder in these pictures had a manner, not a style. He intended this remark to be a little disparaging, and yet the repetitiveness of Ryder's nocturnes—skiff in the foreground, horizon represented as an unbroken ruled line, moon just off-center in the sky above—recalls the fixed, purposefully unvaried formats of Greenberg's favorite paintings. It is in this love of a format, as much as in touch or technique, that Ryder anticipates later American abstract art. The emotions these pictures project are Ryder's own, however. As Broun points out in her catalogue, the boat in moonlight was a standard motif of the

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late-Romantic death wish, suggesting mystery, envelopment, the last trip out. But Ryder's nighttime pictures are serene. In his oceans there are no ripples laid out in perspective to lead the eye to some misty, distant place, as there are in the pictures of so many of his European contemporaries; the seas are flat, the cove is in view, the moonlight is bright. Ryder's boats hug the shore in safety, and when they leap toward the moon they seem to be taken with glee rather than overwhelmed by longing. The pictures are Schubertian rather than Wagnerian, and put one in mind less of any death wish than of the story of Ryder's infatuation with a girl in one of the rabbit-warren boarding houses where he lived; he once heard her sing, his friends said, and then leapt upstairs to propose.

Ryder thought of his literary and religious paintings of the eighties—"Jonah" and "The Tempest," which are among the biggest things he ever did—as his masterpieces. In many ways, his "Jonah" is a ridiculous picture: God the Father, in the sky above, looks uncomfortably like Mr. Natural, while the big fish that emerges from the storm on the right has the baleful, skeptical expression of a Thurber wife. Yet the painting is moving, because one has a sense of an artist who, almost for the first time since the Quattrocento, is genuinely engaged by the story and convinced of its truth.

If "Jonah" is an appealing curiosity, "The Tempest" is actually a pretty good picture. As Ariel brews up the big opening-scene storm, Prospero embraces Miranda out on a rocky promontory, and Caliban looks on. Still, it is an undramatic picture; all the pictorial invention is concentrated in the single triangle that describes the father and daughter, who are dissolved into one of those asymmetrical shapes that Ryder loved, billowing on one side and barbed on the other. Prospero is a Ryder self-portrait, and the picture seems to be a dream image: the artist inventing weather while a girl—more sweetheart than daughter—clings to him.

Ryder's reputation as a luminist and colorist seems a little misplaced. Perhaps his pictures have darkened so much that we no longer see them as they were. Now, at any rate, a roomful of Ryders has a monotonous quality: all the pictures emit the same dull, greenish gas-lamp light, regardless of their place or subject. Even in the marine

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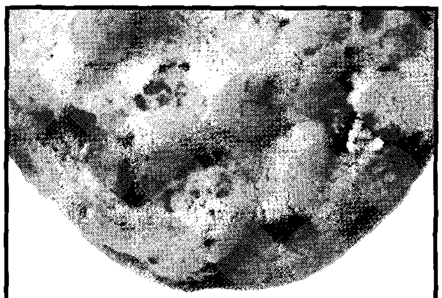

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paintings, if you eliminate the moon with a thumb, the light could be day or night or evening. (Someone once pointed this out to Ryder, and he said, "I hadn't thought about it.") What he did think about was *shapes*. Not form, and not even pictorial designs, in the sense of completed graphic arrangements that can carry across a room; Ryder's pictures are coherent only when you're close to them. Yet somehow he had absorbed—from reproductions of Sienese pictures, from Mannerist portraits, perhaps even from El Greco, who was just becoming the rage—a kind of homespun Gothic, where every closure turns into a pointed, medieval arch. He began to apply this jagged, silhouetted drawing style first to figures and then to nature: his trees became barbed harpoons, and his storm clouds ragged peaks. Ryder's asymmetrical vocabulary of shapes, with spiny thorns playing off against billows and swells, and straight lines broken by sudden sharp turns, was very different from the standard, organ-peal theatrics of nineteenth-century landscape, and it still haunts American art. There is a direct line between Ryder's attenuated shapes and the gibbering, uptilting figures of Thomas Hart Benton, for instance, whose forms were absorbed, in turn, into the work of Benton's student Jackson Pollock. Yet in Ryder's work these silhouettes fit together snugly, like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Only once, however, was Ryder able to combine his drawing style with a motif that seems genuinely and newly experienced, and that was in his greatest picture, "The Race Track (Death on a Pale Horse)." One of the most appealing things about the two new books on Ryder is the picture they paint of Ryder's New York—an O. Henry city of bakeries and saloons and waiters and indigent sopranos. It was a time when New York was still a little countrified. Ryder liked to walk around the Village with a rope-handled stoneware jug, to fetch fresh buttermilk. Ryder loved this world—his friends were mostly jockeys and waiters and bookies—but "The Race Track" is the only Ryder picture to come directly out of that experience. It's a memorial to a waiter Ryder knew, who had a tip on a colt named Hanover in the Brooklyn Handicap, at the Jerome Park racetrack in the Bronx. The waiter bet five hundred dollars on Hanover to win, and

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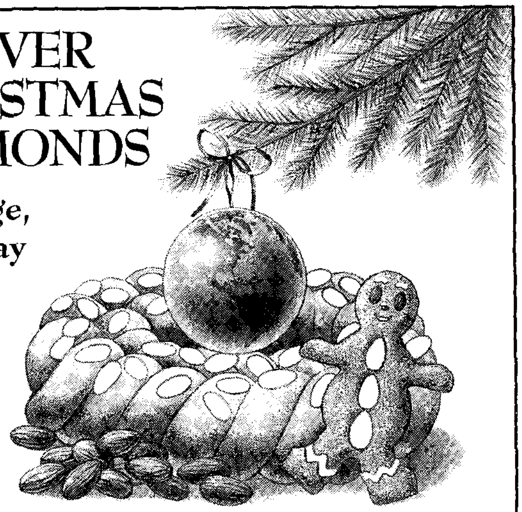

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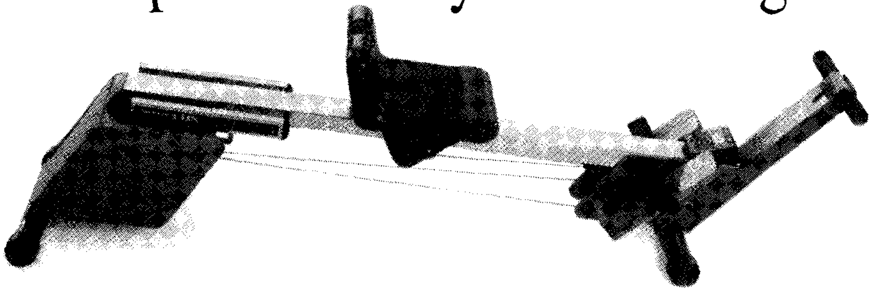

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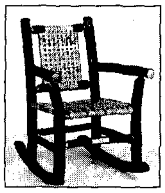

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when Hanover only showed he committed suicide. In the painting, Death, in the form of an unrobed skeleton mounted on a pale horse, rounds the elliptical track, his scythe raised triumphantly above his head, while an undulating snake in the infield paces him. The only verticals in the picture are a single blasted tree and the racetrack fence; a hallucinatory gold-and-violet sky rears above the scene, which may be evening or night or dawn. The absolute ordinariness that Ryder gives to the imagined demons—the sense of Death as a jockey, and the snake as an onlooker with money on the third—is what gives the picture its intensity. (Scholars used to argue about why the horse was running clockwise—the "wrong way"—but it is now known that until 1921 the races at New York racetracks were actually run that way.) "The Race Track" is the one painting in which the companionable, saloon-and-oyster-bar Ryder seems to have been integrated into the mystical and inward-turning Ryder. It suggests that, had he chosen to, Ryder could have become a sort of cross between de Chirico and Damon Runyon—the poet of New York's emergence as a capital of modern life.

RYDER chose, instead, to look away from the city, and helped lead American art from mere descriptive facility toward an "unobtrusive sincerity." Yet what is strange and original about Ryder's work is not that he gave up on facility but that he didn't think you would have to give anything else up at the same time. All over Europe, Ryder's contemporaries were rejecting conventional skill, too, but with a heroic readiness to sacrifice all the old ambitions of art as well; illustration, and history painting, and literary allusions, they knew, would have to go, along with the formulas of the Academy. Next door to the Ryder show the Brooklyn Museum's Sarah Faunce has put together a modest and beautiful exhibit of Ryder's European contemporaries. The Cézannes and late Monets still tremble and glare with their sublimation of learning and emotion into description, simple objects and bright colors—even their radiance seems in part a reward for giving up so much. Ryder, by comparison, took it for granted that a simplified art of "abstract expression" could still illuminate Shakespeare and rival Duccio. Elizabeth Broun quotes a passage from "Moby Dick" that seems prescient of Ryder's art. In it, Ishmael (and in New Bedford, too) sees a confounding painting: "A boggy, soggy, squitchy picture. . . . Yet was there a sort of indefinite, half-attained, unimaginable sublimity about it that fairly froze you to it, till you involuntarily took an oath with yourself to find out what that marvellous painting meant. Ever and anon a bright, but . . . deceptive idea would dart you through. . . . But at last all these fancies yielded to that one portentous something in the picture's midst. *That* once found out, and all the rest were plain. But stop; does it not bear a faint resemblance to a gigantic fish? even the great leviathan himself?" It is almost a program for Ryder, and, in a way, for the American painting that claims Ryder as its father.

Ryder thought that you could get boggy and soggy, indefinite and half-attained, and Shakespeare and Wagner and Prospero and Death and Drayton and Chaucer would all still be available—all the big fish and great leviathans would still swim happily in the painterly soup. To put it historically, Ryder's most enduring eccentricity was to have initiated the American belief that the symbolist language of nuance and indirection and abstract pattern could become a completely sufficient vehicle for an art of unimaginable sublimity. "Only that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless," Mark Rothko could write, some thirty years later, as he eliminated everything from his pictures but a couple of beautiful oblong blurs. Perhaps we flatter ourselves by calling this overconfidence simply "innocence"—it is also, after all, a kind of presumption, and manifests our love of spiritual shortcuts. It was, however, apparently a necessary faith for American art. After Ryder's death in 1917, artists went on embracing it for almost half a century. On the whole, we still do, even though by now it is hard not to see that it is a faith that leaves even the things it graces a little bit cracked.

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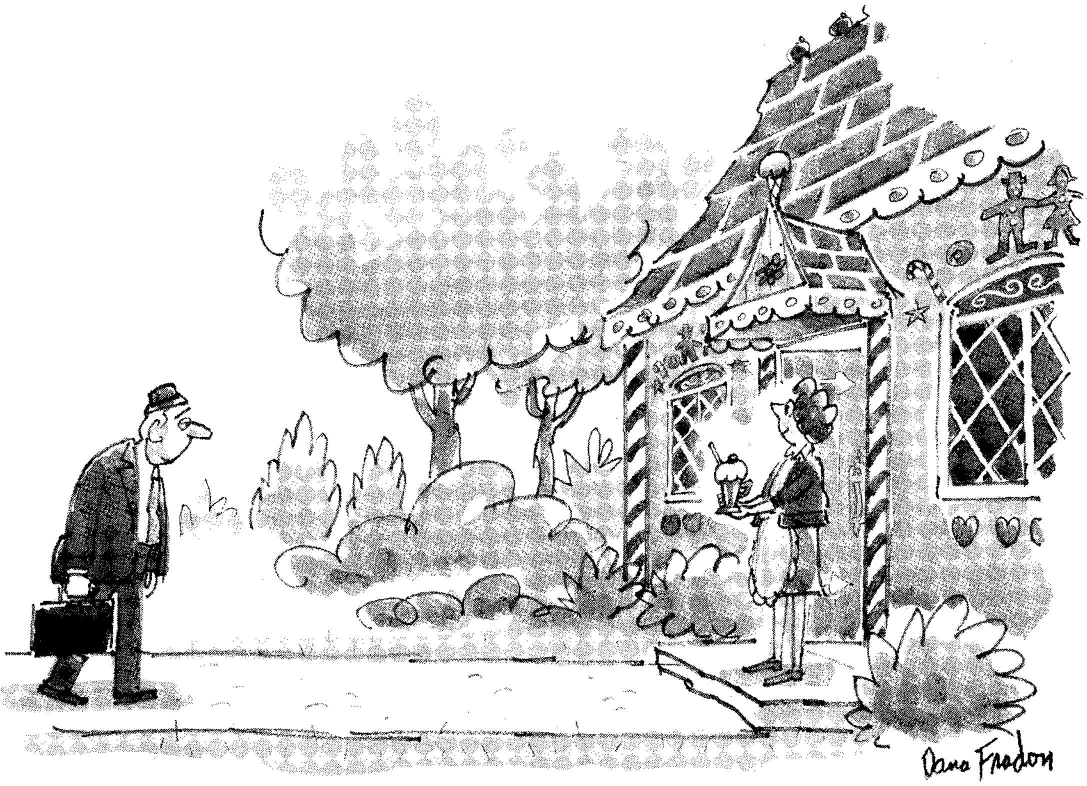
That makes casting her as Lilly Dillon in "The Grifters" an intuitive sneaky-right decision, because the core of the story is the refusal of Lilly's son, Roy (John Cusack), to have anything to do with her. He's paying her back. In his childhood, she was cold and miserly; she withheld any kindness. Now that he's twenty-five and has been on his own since he was seventeen, she shows up. Lilly is tough and she's seductive; she's the dominatrix as mother, and he's afraid of her getting her hooks in him.

"The Grifters" is based on one of the punchier pulp novels by Jim Thompson—a bitter, somewhat repellent book with a misanthropic integrity. Published in 1963, it's about three scam artists (Lilly, Roy, and Roy's bubbly bedmate Moira, played by Annette Bening)—people who never got a break and don't give anybody else a break. Each of these chisellers has his or her own methods and agenda; there's no yielding by any of them (and no redemption). The film retains Thompson's hardboiled pitilessness, and a tension is created by placing these fifties or early sixties characters in nineties L.A. locations; we feel piqued, jazzed up. Toying with L.A. film noir, the director, Stephen Frears, and the scriptwriter, Donald E. Westlake, do twisted, anomalous things. The Elmer Bernstein score tries for a tart, sour Kurt Weill effect, and doesn't quite bring it off, but Westlake keeps some of Thompson's slangy, compact dialogue and adds his own, which has a madcap edge. The movie starts with comic capers, then uses Thompson's class resentment and grim hopelessness to smack us with discord. We're watching a form of cabaret.

This criminal subculture doesn't come equipped with a detective as moral explorer. It's a void, where Roy, who holds a salesman's job as a cover, lives alone by rules he has devised for himself. A cautious, hard-eyed practitioner of the "short con"—fleecing cashiers by getting change for a twenty and slipping them a ten, or playing craps with trick dice—he doesn't have to worry about doing time in prison. Roy has repressed any signs of an identifiable personality, and he does nothing to attract attention; he won't let himself have friends—that's being a sucker. He makes himself colorless, and socks his money away. It's a horrible, grubby life—a mole's life—and he's an intelligent, handsome kid, who could have gone to college, who could have lived among people. It's his angry touchiness about his young mother (she was only fourteen when she had him) that keeps him in his miserable isolation. He's getting even with her by throwing his life away.

Frears introduces the three characters (in the sections of a vertically divided triple screen) as they arrive at the places where they're about to do their grifts. Each of the three is putting on the face that he or she presents to the world. We're formally meeting three false fronts. It's Lilly's dream that her son will go straight and be a loving comfort to her, but she herself works for the Baltimore syndicate: she travels, placing bets at the tracks. Annette Bening's Moira is a sex fantasy come to luscious life. She's irrepressible—a real tootsie—and it takes a while for her adorable, kittenish perversity to make you apprehensive. Moira the smiler has been trained in big cons—scams that rake in bundles of money but can also land you in prison—and she's out to make Roy her partner. Roy likes Moira in his bed, but he was jerked around by his mother and he's not about to get jerked around



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again. He hates feeling that people might want to make something of him; he's not interested in becoming anything. Cusack suggests that Roy is cocky enough to think that he's something already, that he's living on his own terms.

Roy turns both women down, but he's an innocent compared with these two blondes—the killer mom and the tease—who are close to the same age. (It's perfect that Cusack gives his most memorable line reading to the word "Mom.") The two women battle over Roy's essence—the money that's hidden in the clown paintings in his apartment. In the structure of the film, it's Roy who's the clown.

There's nothing to fill out in a Jim Thompson novel; there's no room for characterization. It's socially conscious thin stuff. The three are stuck. You grasp the limits of what's available to them and how hard their dreams hit those limits, and you see them try to break through by using each other. Frears and Westlake are smart enough not to attempt to make a big thing of it. They keep it snappy, and heighten the sexual electricity.

Bening's two-faced little-girl quality is dazzling—just what film noir thrives on. When Moira blames Lilly for Roy's rejecting her proposition and turns treacherous, Bening makes the shift convincing; she's a stunning actress and a superb wiggler. And film noir is enriched by two competing femmes fatales. Huston's power as Lilly is astounding. This actress generally plays tightly controlled characters. (Her Gretta Conroy in "The Dead" was an exception.) Lilly is usually peremptory, displaying the authority of a woman who has worked for big-time mobsters for years; her whole existence is based on manipulation and control. She's a thief trying to outwit the thieves she works for. When she isn't sure she's succeeding, we can read the terror under the control. She's like a trapped animal when her boss (Pat Hingle), who thinks she has tricked him, shows up to punish her. Hingle, sucking on a big cigar, is chilling; as the power m.c. pulling the strings, he gives what's probably his best performance ever, and Huston matches him. The scene has a jangle; it's "Cabaret" moved from Berlin to L.A.

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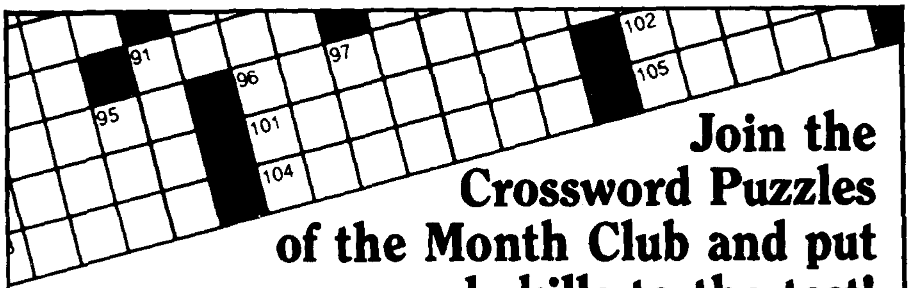
comes down in the elevator at Roy's apartment hotel, you may be reminded of Mary Astor in the elevator at the close of John Huston's "The Maltese Falcon," and when, a little before that, Lilly pulls a maneuver on her son that's just about the ultimate con, you may recall John Huston in "Chinatown" saying, "Most people never have to face that at the right time and right place, they're capable of anything."

The leading characters' acceptance of brutality in Martin Scorsese's "GoodFellas" fails to scare us, and it doesn't haunt us afterward—perhaps it isn't meant to. But by the end of "The Grifters" (which Scorsese produced) Lilly's ruthless amorality is shocking—it has weight—and I think that's because Anjelica Huston is willing to be taken as monstrous; she contains this possibility as part of what she is. And when Lilly shows her willingness to do anything to survive she's a great character. At the end of John Huston's "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre," the fortune is dispersed to the winds; here it's gathered up. Anjelica Huston's Lilly bites right through the film-noir pulp; the scene is paralyzing, and it won't go away.

"REVERSAL OF FORTUNE" comes to sophisticated hammy life when Jeremy Irons, as Claus von Bülow, talks to the Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz (Ron Silver) about representing him. The deep, mellow drawl that comes out of Irons' von Bülow is a triumph of comic affectation; it's the voice of self-satisfaction—of a man who likes his vowel sounds so much he lingers over them. Irons is naturally desiccated; he isn't outgoing, and he doesn't have the bullying physique that, say, Rutger Hauer might have brought to the role. He doesn't inspire dread. But with Hauer the material might not have lent itself to light comedy. Scene by scene, Irons' glassy aloofness is very funny. What he does is a mock performance. It's a masterly conceit, and, as such, it's bizarrely witty. It's what theatre critics used to call "delicious."

Irons' von Bülow is a pop conception of a decadent aristocrat—a creep so polished and courtly and cynical that he finds the accusation of murder too banal to be seriously addressed. The director, Barbet Schroeder, is onto something: an actor playing an actor. At the time of the trial, von Bülow himself did seem to be mocking the



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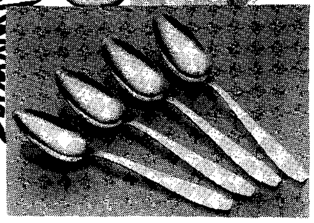

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public interest in him. The movie is a sick-joke docudrama about how his conviction for trying to kill his super-rich wife was overturned on appeal through the brainpower of Dershowitz and his team of students and former students. The crowd-pleasing satirical subtext is that our super-rich—the heirs and heiresses of the great fortunes—are useless, bored, unloving, and unloved. They adore titles (even fake ones, like von Bülow's von), and their adoration puts them at the mercy of wellborn fortune hunters.

Sunny von Bülow (Glenn Close), who lives on in an irreversible coma, serves, amusingly, as narrator, and the movie gives the strong impression that she was brain-dead before she was brain-dead. It also gives the strong impression that, whether or not von Bülow gave her toxic injections, he passively collaborated in destroying her by politely catering to her self-destructive wishes. (He says, "Sunny got what Sunny wanted," as if that explained why he handed more liquor to his already besotted wife.) So we need feel no sympathy for Sunny and no active involvement in Claus's fate. The staging is often amateurish (it's especially disappointing in the scenes where von Bülow gets together with Dershowitz's team), and Sunny's supposedly lavish décor looks tired, like the furnishings of an ostentatious seedy hotel, but it's an entertainingly trashy movie—a happy debauch.

Probably most of us would be even happier if it weren't for the time consumed by Ron Silver as Dershowitz. The script, by Nicholas Kazan, is skillfully constructed, but it's based on Dershowitz's book about the case, and he's the protagonist—the crusading lawyer searching for evidence of innocence. There's an idea here: the strapping Teutonic knight, in all his smug, anti-Semitic grandeur, is saved by the little loudmouth Jew. It turns out to be a bad idea. The lawyer-client relationship begins with a nifty double take: Dershowitz (in his Groucho mustache) smarts at von Bülow's patrician condescension. And we look forward to hooting at the lawyer's sanctimoniousness. But soon Ron Silver is playing healthy, feisty Jewishness. That this is a positive stereotype makes it no less a stereotype. Dershowitz's life-enhancing scenes are flatulent, and they're dishonest: the movie seems to be putting us down for enjoying the scandal satire it's dishing up. And, with Dershowitz's son Elon as one of the producers (and played as a warm, laughing son by Stephen Mailer), the film's emphasis on the lawyer's moral qualms and high principles is blatant grandstanding.

Clearly, Schroeder knows it: he directs Jeremy Irons and, in the flashbacks, Glenn Close with some flair, but he hasn't the stomach for lionizing the professor. You get no sense of intellectual capacity from Ron Silver's performance, and the scenes in which he works to keep his crew of assistants steamed up are standard, impersonal TV—emptily energetic. The fun here is that Irons' von Bülow is a depraved cuckoo. He simply can't resist playing ghoulish comedian and making Dershowitz his stooge.

IN "Vincent & Theo," Vincent (Tim Roth) is slight, and has carrot-colored hair, jagged teeth, and workman's clothes smeared with paint; his tall, dark younger brother, the art dealer Theo (Paul Rhys), is turned out like a bourgeois aesthete. But when they're together and flare up, their words burst out impatiently, spasmodically. They have similar temperaments and a helpless inability to be calm and rational with each other. The director, Robert Altman, and the screenwriter, Julian Mitchell, know that we have some understanding of the basic Vincent van Gogh life story—the loneliness, the self-mutilation, the early death. What they've given us is an interpretation of the bond between the brothers—the bond that helps to keep Vincent alive while it tears Theo apart.

Vincent is obsessive about his painting; Theo is obsessive about Vincent and about his own inability to sell Vincent's work and help him—he can give him only a pittance. When Theo gets the telegram from Arles telling him that Vincent has cut off his earlobe, he takes a minute to be sick and then goes to him. In Arles, he touches the words that Vincent has written on the wall of his house: "I am the holy spirit. I am whole in spirit." Theo fits his hand flat against the handprint Vincent has left on the wall, and we know that Theo will never be whole in spirit.

At the hospital, Theo takes Vincent's hand. As he sits there bowed down, Vincent cops a look at him, and there's a suggestion that Vincent is checking to gauge the depth of Theo's agony. When Theo returns to Paris, his wife, meaning to comfort him, reaches for his hand; he pulls it away, refusing solace. Ill with syphilis, he has some of Vincent's reckless urgency; it's at war with his efforts to make an elegant conventional life for himself and his wife.

The two brothers' names hand-printed on top of swirls of thick ochre paint form the opening title, and then there's a flash-forward to the auction at Christie's where "Sunflowers" is sold for forty million dollars. This is the movie's taking-off place: an irony too obvious to be satirical and too obvious to be ignored. The film looks at it straight on. The auction is a union of the worlds the brothers are trapped in, a culmination of their yearnings and frustrations. Throughout the picture, Altman crosscuts between Theo's attempt to function as a businessman dealer and Vincent's plunging further into sun and light and crying out for the companionship he needs to stabilize him.

It has become standard practice to disparage Vincente Minnelli's 1956 "Lust for Life," with Kirk Douglas as Vincent—principally, maybe, because it's a big Hollywood production. But it's an honorable big production, and Douglas and, in the relatively small part of Theo, James Donald are far from contemptible. What dates it is that Minnelli, following the dramatic conventions of his period, lays everything out for us, and, desperate not to be cheap or overblown, he's somewhat pedestrian. The Altman film is emotionally direct. When we first see Tim Roth's Vincent, he's lying on top of his bedcovers. The scene might be a still-life until he blinks and makes sudden, jerky movements with his pipe, moving it from his mouth to his hand and back again; Theo is in the room talking to him (about money, as always), and Vincent's reactions to him are so lightninglike they're almost subliminal. The brothers are inside each other's heads, and we have an extreme degree of empathy with Vincent. Without any overt "acting," Roth's Vincent simply gets to us, and we understand how he gets to Theo. Roth's acting is a form of kinetic discharge. It's 1879, and this is Vincent van Gogh taunting Theo with the announcement "I'm going to be a painter. What do you think of that?" Yet it's as if he were

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someone we'd grown up with—a self-amused, deracinated boy whose crooked, toothy smile drew us to him though he'd always alarmed us a little.

In the years that the movie spans—van Gogh's life as a painter, from 1879 to 1890—Vincent studies draftsmanship and tries to make the art scene, but he begins to be detached from the life going on around him. He takes part in it politely, but he's not there emotionally—he's only in his work. Vincent is a zealot about ways of seeing; then, as he becomes more isolated, his art becomes all about what he feels. And the film seems to pass beyond conventional sophistication and to see things from Vincent's point of view. Altman doesn't simply reproduce the scenes that van Gogh painted; rather, he brings out responses similar to the responses you have when you look at the paintings. He heads right for the sensuality, the intensity.

You feel that especially after Vincent has quarrelled with Paul Gauguin *(Wladimir Yordanoff): a field of sunflowers* in the wind is like a sulfur storm overpowering the artist. The orchestral score, by Gabriel Yared, is soft and lyrical, but with an exciting overlay of electronic discord—of something deafening. Vincent smashes a canvas among the sunflowers—then uproots a few to take home. Whenever he's painting, he sticks his brushes in his mouth; now, carrying the storm back to his room, he licks the paint and muck off his table, finishes the last of his booze, and takes a swig of turpentine. He spits out a mouthful, cries out, and takes another swig. This time, he gets it down. His lifting a knife to his ear is just the next step. At the end of his life, you feel the way you do when someone you grew up with dies. You feel as you do coming out of O'Neill's "A Moon for the Misbegotten": you know that the character couldn't go on any longer. Vincent ruptures the flesh; he ruptures the canvas.

Theo, who's all big, protruding eyes, can't go on much longer, either. Throughout, in the crosscut scenes, we've been steeped in his oppressive workplaces and cramped apartments. In one scene, he tiptoes among dozens of tiny, ornately framed pictures laid out on the floor. The walls, with patterned wallpapers (like Vuillard's) and paintings hung frame next to frame, always seem to be closing in. And when he rents a room to commemorate Vincent's paintings—an empty space where he's surrounded by them—and his wife, Jo (the remarkable young actress Johanna Ter Steege), and his brother-in-law (Hans Kesting) look at him as if he's lost his mind, he shuts the door on them. He has told them the truth—that this art is the most important thing in his life. With Vincent dead, it's clear that Vincent was what was pagan and alive in Theo. Alone, he crumples on the floor like a Schiele *figure; he's got nothing left but* his torment. The film moves from Theo in his shrine vanishing into Vincent's paintings to Theo naked in an institution vanishing into madness. (He survived Vincent by only six months.)

This double Passion-play movie is very different from the other Robert Altman movies (even allowing for how different they are from each other). The theme—the bitter entanglement of art and commerce—holds Altman in a vise of his choosing. He doesn't go at *it glancingly here.* This great theme is his lifelong theme, and, staying with it strictly in terms of the van Gogh brothers, he's able to release his own feelings about how an artist's frustrations lead him to acts of self-destructive fury—cutting off his ear to spite his face. It's a movie about two sensualists made by a sensualist, who understands that their bond of love of art is also a bond of shared rage at the world of commerce. Theo suddenly walks away from Vincent's funeral, where the glib, fatuous Dr. Gachet (Jean-Pierre Cassel)—a collector who keeps his paintings in a vault—is speaking; Theo can't listen to the pomposities an instant longer.

There isn't a high-flown minute in this movie. It has a simple, fluid tactility and a quick tempo. Julian Mitchell's dialogue is to the point, and the scenes aren't resolved; they're left just slightly askew. Near the beginning, Vincent's prostitute-model Sien (Jip Wjingaarden) blows up at him because he goes *on sketching her when she's on her* break—when *she* isn't modelling, when she's herself. It's partly an issue of privacy, but it's also an issue of commerce; the breaks are *her* time. Vincent stops and apologizes, though it's when she is herself that she's a great subject. Perhaps he's just being politic. (Altman, famed for his spontaneity, his caught moments, allows for a faint ambiguousness.) Vincent takes the regnant Sien and her small daughter o an exhibition of a three-hundred-nd-sixty-degree painting, a diorama f a seascape that's like an ancestor of notion pictures, except that it's the pectators who move; the child goes nto the seascape to pee. And there's a igh-strung variation on the usual joyus repasts in the French countryside: Theo, Jo, Vincent, and others are gathered at Dr. Gachet's table listenng [illegible] this self-congratulatory fellow hoot the breeze about Vincent's being ured and as sane as anybody. (When he Doctor is afraid that his daughter Marguerite, played by Bernadette Giaud, is becoming fond of Vincent, he ays that Vincent is a hopeless case.)

Gauguin has an arrogant self-suffiiency that makes it clear he could ever be the admiring friend Vincent onged for; Vincent was deluded about im. Vincent, trudging along with his ackpack, has only Theo, and he obstiately pressures him, believing that Theo could sell his pictures if he just ried harder; he wants to believe that hings are simpler than they are. After is experience with Gauguin, he gives p on humanity. But he still has flickring hopes. Like his brother, he's rawn to the wholesome, redemptive hysicality of creamy-cheeked boureois women. Dr. Gachet's words about is condition close off this possibility.

This daring movie works on its own elentless, celebratory terms. The prouction design, by Stephen Altman the director's son), and the cinemaography, by Jean Lepine, are freshly hought out. With their help, the diector gets images—such as the ones of ien at the beach, staggering into the urf as she goes into labor—that have omething comparable to the power of he paintings. Something devastating is chieved when Vincent in the wheat eld where the crows are cawing sets a anvas on his easel. He draws a line on , looks toward what he's about to aint, but is too upset to make another ark, and enters the picture. The rows take wing.

The actors and the moviemakers ave felt their way into the van Gogh assion and madness, and come out ith an austere movie. It doesn't flinch om the blunt banality of saying that ere's no place for the artist's single-inded intensity in this commercial orld. Which is true yet not quite true. ltman finds a sliver of an audience.

—PAULINE KAEL

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DEPARTMENT OF AMPLIFICATION

NOVEMBER 8, 1990

IN my Annals of Radiation about the health hazard posed by the sixty-hertz magnetic fields that are given off by high-current and high-voltage power lines (July 9, 1990) I cited evidence suggesting that a cancer cluster had occurred among the residents of Meadow Street in Guilford, Connecticut. During the past twenty years, seven tumors—two malignant brain tumors, two cases of meningioma (a rare and generally nonmalignant tumor of the brain), a malignant eye tumor, an ovarian tumor, and a tumor of the tibia—have been recorded among children and adults living on that street, which is only two hundred and fifty yards long and has only nine houses on it. Because all seven tumors developed in people who were living or had lived for significant periods of time in five of six adjacent houses situated near an electric-power substation and next to some main distribution power lines carrying high current from the substation, I suggested that the cancer among the residents of Meadow Street was associated with chronic exposure to the magnetic fields that are given off by such wires. To support that contention, I cited the fact that during the past decade some two dozen epidemiological studies had been conducted and published in the medical literature of the United States and other parts of the world showing that children and workers exposed to power-line magnetic fields were developing cancer—chiefly leukemia, lymphoma, melanoma, brain tumors, and other central-nervous-system cancers—at rates significantly higher than those observed in unexposed people, and the fact that between 1985 and 1989 no fewer than twelve studies had shown more brain tumors than were to be expected among people exposed to electric and magnetic fields at home or at work.

At a public meeting held in the Guilford Public Library on August 20th, David R. Brown, chief of the Connecticut Department of Health Services' Division of Environmental Epidemiology and Occupational Health, and Sandy Geschwind, an epidemiologist with the division, declared that there was no cancer cluster on Meadow Street. To support their contention, they distributed a document entitled "Guilford Cancer Cluster Preliminary Investigation," claiming that "there was not a cluster of the same kind of tumors on Meadow Street," and that from 1968 through 1988 "Guilford as a whole did not experience a higher than expected number of brain cancer or meningioma cases." The document stated, further, that "mapping of these brain tumors and meningioma cases showed that they did not cluster in a particular area but were scattered throughout the town."

At that meeting, Geschwind gave a presentation in which she said that one of the brain cancers on Meadow Street was not a primary tumor but an esophageal cancer that had metastasized. She also said that the malignant eye tumor in question was a melanoma—a type of cancer that she claimed had never been associated with exposure to electromagnetic fields—and she assured her listeners that meningioma had never been associated with exposure to such fields. Toward the end of her presentation, Geschwind displayed a map showing the location of ten meningiomas and nineteen other brain and central-nervous-system tumors listed by the Connecticut Tumor Registry as having occurred in Guilford between 1968 and 1988, and told the hundred or so members of her audience—they included a dozen newspaper and television reporters—that the map proved that there was "absolutely no clustering" in Guilford and that the state investigation showed "no cancer cluster on Meadow Street."

However, the fact that Guilford as a whole—the town now has a population of twenty thousand five hundred, living in seventy-three hundred dwellings—did not experience a higher than expected number of meningiomas and other brain and nervous-system tumors during those twenty-one years does not address the situation on Meadow Street. Second, while there is no reason to doubt Geschwind's assertion that one of the two brain cancers among Meadow Street residents was not a primary tumor, eye melanoma—the one in question was a malignant tumor involving the optic nerve, an extension of the brain—has been found to be "notably high for electrical and electronics workers," who are known to be exposed to strong magnetic fields. The finding appeared in a highly regarded study entitled "Epidemiology of Eye Cancer in Adults in England and Wales, 1962-1977," which was conducted by Dr. A. J. Swerdlow, a physician at the Department of Community Medicine of the University of Glasgow, in Scotland. Swerdlow reported his findings in 1983, in Volume 118, No. 2, of the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, which is published by the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health, in Baltimore. Moreover, melanoma of the skin is one of three types of cancer listed by scientists of the Environmental Protection Agency in a recent draft report, "An Evaluation of the Potential Carcinogenicity of Electromagnetic Fields," as being prevalent among workers in electrical and electronic occupations, and thus associated with exposure to magnetic fields.

The conclusion of Brown and Geschwind that there is no cancer cluster among people who have lived on Meadow Street seems disingenuous, to say the least. As Geschwind noted, the Connecticut Tumor Registry recorded ten cases of meningioma and nineteen other primary tumors of the brain and central nervous system among Guilford residents between 1968 and 1988—a span in which the average population of the town was seventeen thousand five hundred. Thus the meningioma rate in Guilford is consistent with the Connecticut statewide incidence, of 2.6 cases per hundred thousand people per year—I was in error when I gave it in my article as one case per hundred thousand—and the incidence of other brain and central-nervous-system tumors in Guilford is also close to the number that would normally be expected. The fact that three of the twenty-nine primary brain and central-nervous-system tumors that occurred in Guilford during those twenty-one years developed among a handful of people who lived in four of five adjacent houses on Meadow Street that are situated near a substation and very close to a pair of high-current distribution lines, called feeders, together with the fact that a malignant eye tumor, involving a tract of brain tissue, occurred in a woman who had lived in a sixth adjacent dwelling, next to a third feeder line, surely suggests that there is a cancer cluster of some significance on Meadow Street.

Finally, and somewhat ironically,

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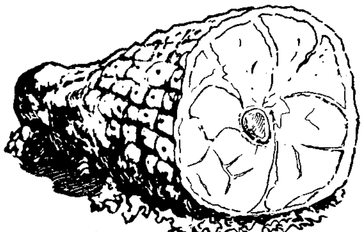

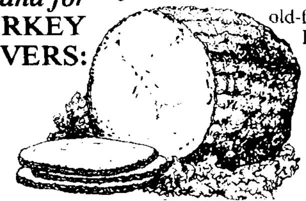

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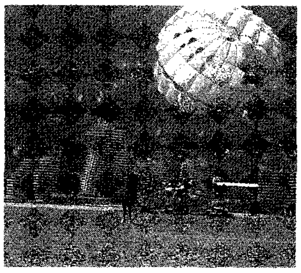
further evidence of cancer clustering associated with exposure to power-line magnetic fields can be found in the very map that Geschwind displayed in an effort to persuade the people of Guilford that no cancer cluster existed there. Among those listening to her presentation was Robert Hemstock, a Guilford resident, who, in January of this year, first sounded the alarm about a cluster on Meadow Street. When Geschwind held up the map, Hemstock noticed that three of the twenty-nine cancers on it appeared to have occurred along the route of a feeder line that carried high current from the Meadow Street substation to other towns during the nineteen-sixties, seventies, and early eighties, when the substation was being operated by its owner, the Connecticut Light & Power Company, as a bulk-supply station for large-load areas in Madison and Clinton—neighboring towns with a total population of about twenty thousand during that period. He also noticed that an unusually large proportion of the other brain tumors on the map appeared to have occurred among people living along the routes of other primary distribution lines emanating from the substation.

After the meeting, Hemstock shared his observation with Don Michak, a reporter for the Manchester Enfield *Journal Inquirer*, who on August 23rd asked the Department of Health Services for a copy of the map. As it happened, Brown had displayed the map the day before at a Rotary Club meeting in Guilford, and told the Rotarians that he saw no need for the department to make any further inquiry into the incidence of cancer on Meadow Street. However, Health Services officials refused to release the map to Michak, on the ground that to do so might violate the confidentiality of cancer victims by revealing their addresses. The *Journal Inquirer* reported this development in an article by Michak on September 6th, and on September 10th it published an editorial pointing out that if the withheld map showed that the distribution of cancer cases in Guilford corresponded to the Meadow Street substation and to a power line running north from it "the public's concern might be overwhelming not only in Guilford but throughout Connecticut and even nationally." The editorial went on to question Health Services' rationale for secrecy, declaring that the map "is just a matter of dots superimposed on a map



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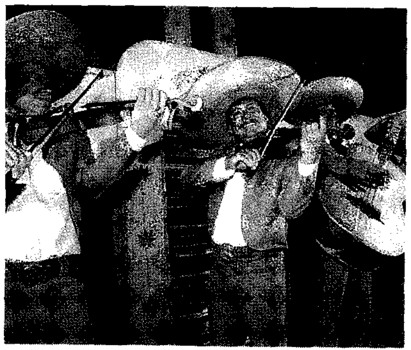

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Indeed, the country's capital is a good place to start. The city's most flamboyant sector is the Zona Rosa, or Pink Zone. In the narrow, tree-lined boulevards of this area are the pick of the restaurants, svelte bou-

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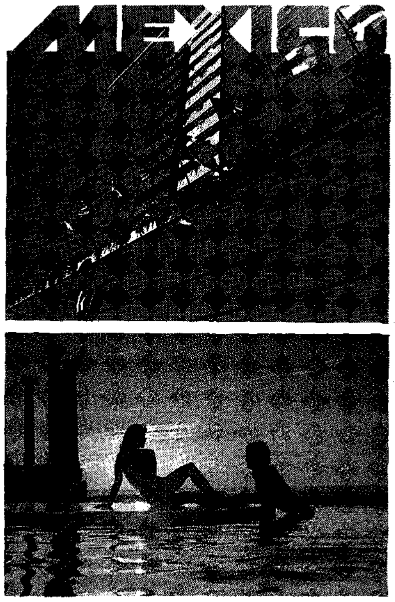

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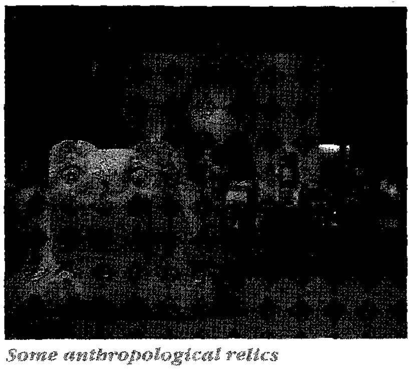
Fittingly, Mexico City is a caretaker of much of the country's historic treasures. Along the Paseo de la Reforma, which the Emperor Maximilian modelled after the Champs-Élysées, lies Chapultepec Park, where there are several museums, the most imposing being the National Anthropological Museum. A half-dozen blocks east of Reforma you'll find the Zócalo, once the Halls of Montezuma and now the heart of the city. Here stands the seventeenth-century National Palace, which houses the offices of the president and a set of murals by Diego Rivera. Close by, near the Metropolitan Cathedral, excavations in 1978 uncovered an Aztec city, which is open to the archaeologically inclined.

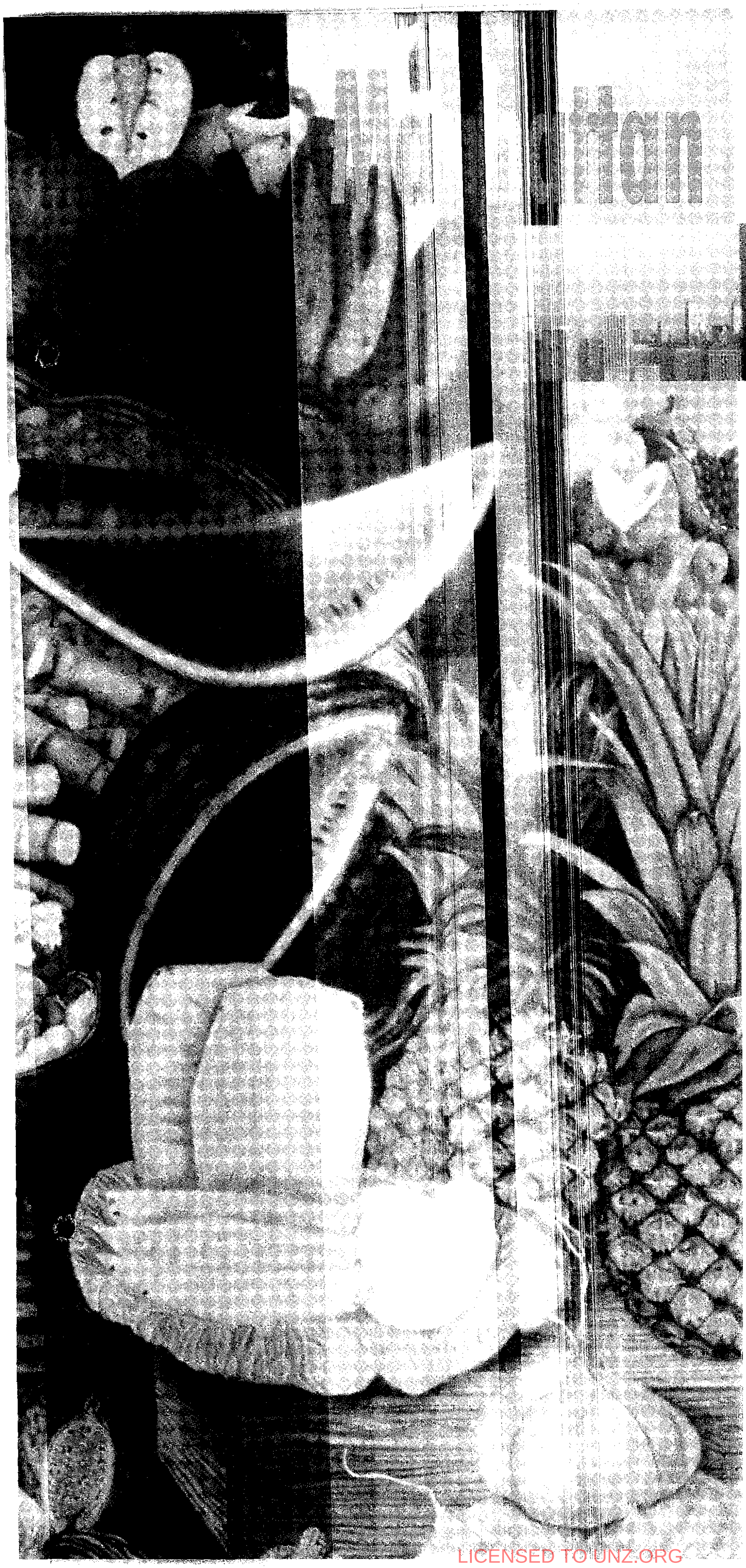
Still in the Aztec mood, travel thirty miles north to the ancient city of Teotihuacán, where ruins date back to A.D. 500. The ruins are dominated by the two-hundred-and-ten-foot-high Pyramid of the Sun and the nearly-as-high Pyramid of the Moon. Gung-ho tourists can climb the steps all the way to the top; sound-and-light shows are held in the evenings.

The average hedonist's antenna will point south to the fleshly pleasures of Acapulco and Cancún, but the tourist who wants more than one slice of the Mexican pie will head west to Puerto Vallarta. Its secluded coves along the twenty-eight-mile Bahía de Banderas are still unspoiled, and Puerto Vallarta has an almost rain-free climate.



Some anthropological relics

Two hundred miles north [illegible] Puerto Vallarta lies Mazatlán, whose offshore waters are usually rife with deep-sea fishers. Energetic visitors hike the half-hour trail to the imposing El Faro lighthouse, five hundred feet above the sea. Bullfight aficionados should time their visits to Mazatlán to coincide with the season of *el toro* frenzy, from December to May.



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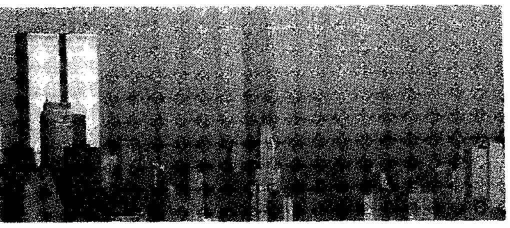

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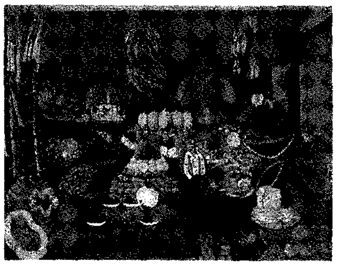

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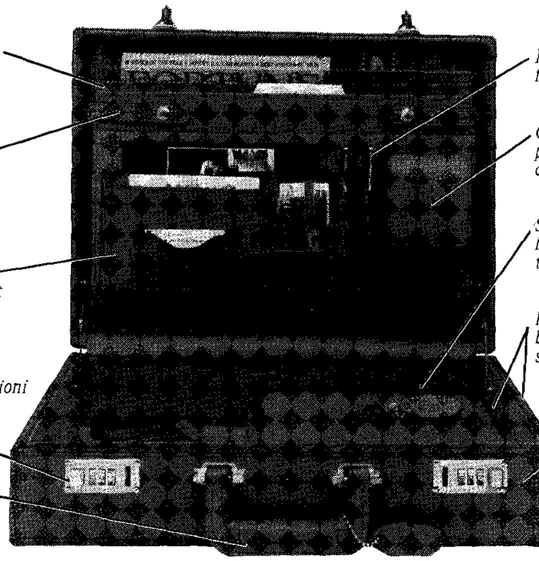

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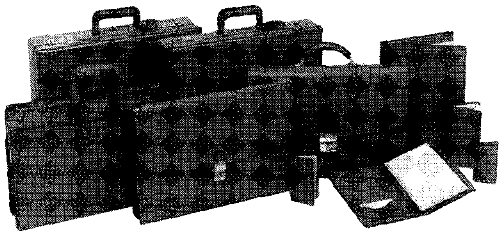

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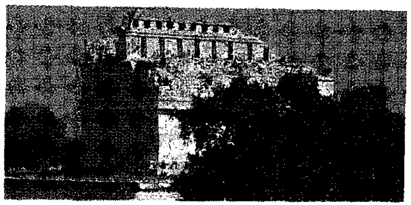
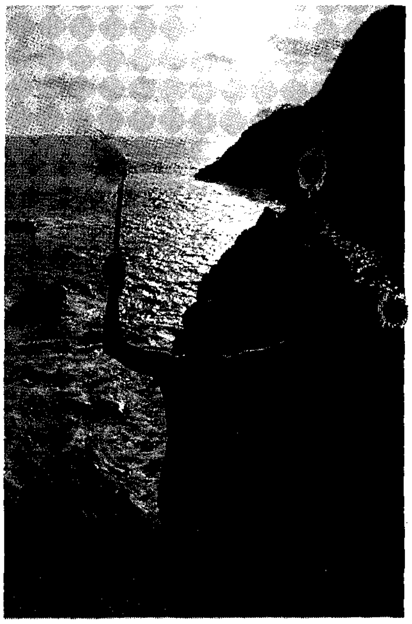


Ruins are everywhere

If you would like to literally cross someone's palm with silver, head south from Mexico City through Cuernavaca — weekend haunt of Maximilian and site of the sixteenth-century Palace of Cortés — and you'll hit the mile-high colonial town of Taxco. This village is a most pleasing sight; white-washed houses with gleaming red-tiled roofs in layer upon layer, ascending the mountainside. Most of the town's three hundred shops deal in silver, everything from trinkets to silver-studded sombreros to goblets and exquisite tea sets.

No atmosphere could offer a more glaring contrast to Taxco than that of Acapulco, farther south. This is as near to the madding crowd as you can get. Acapulco is wild discos and a succession of beaches. The main dress code is the skimpiest of bikinis, even among shoppers at the ritzy boutiques. Veracruz, founded by Cortés on the Gulf of Mexico's Emerald Coast, is across the Bay of Campeche from the Yucatán Penin-



An Acapulco cliff diver at La Quebrada sula, and boasts some of the finest seafood in Mexico.

Curiously, considering it was known only as the jumping-off place for the famed Mayan ruins nearby, Cancún has become one of Mexico's liveliest resorts. This is the place for colorful fiesta nights, a slew of water sports, tennis galore, golf, and shopping for onyx and luxury goods at the many malls. Day trips to the archaeological delights of Chichén Itzá and Tulum are easily organized. Diving enthusiasts are inclined to make a pilgrimage from Cancún to Isla Mujeres and the national marine park of El Garrafón.

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Ian Glass is a Miami-based travel writer whose work has appeared in Travel & Leisure *and* The New York Times; *he is the author of* Fodor's Bahamas '91.

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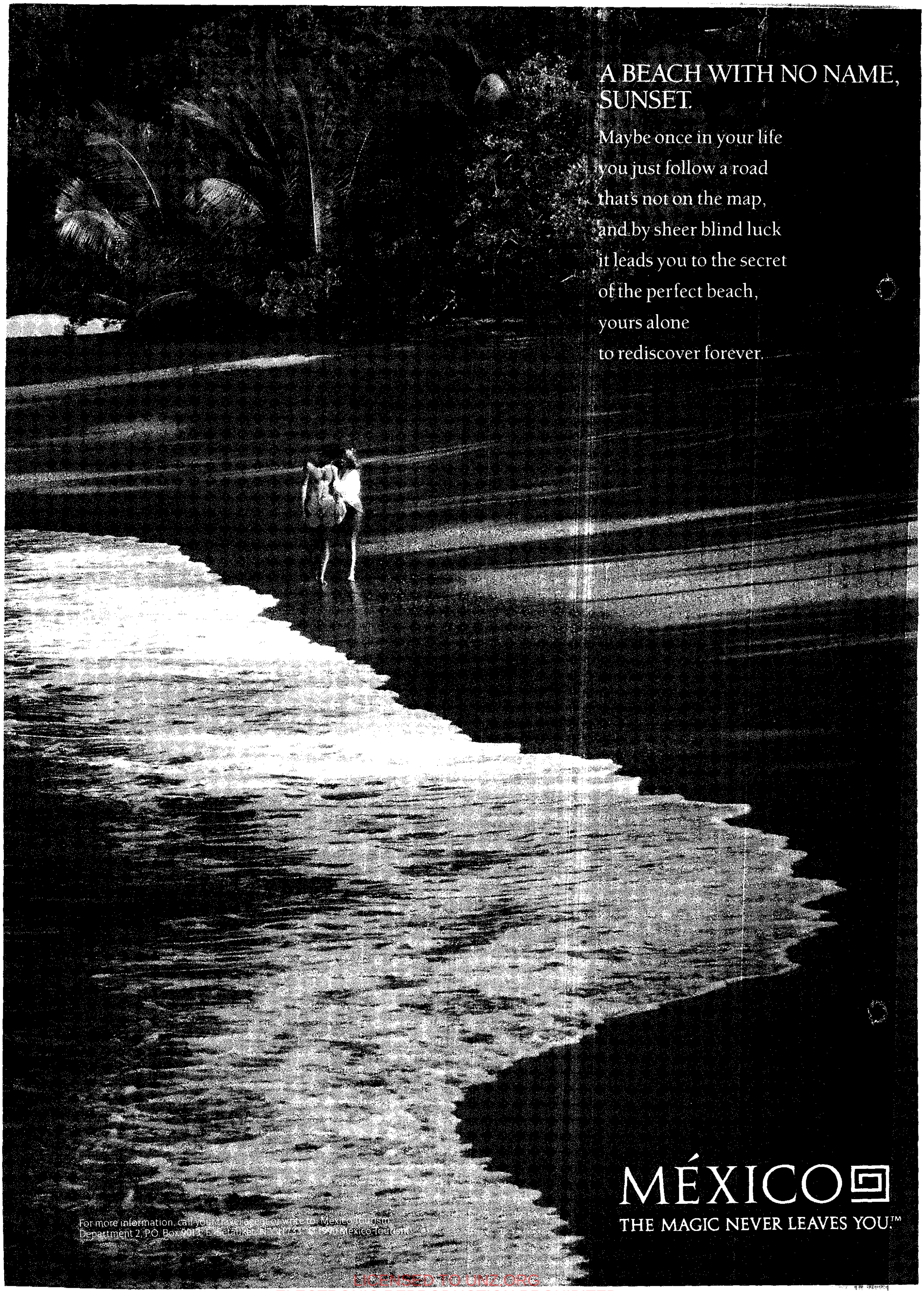

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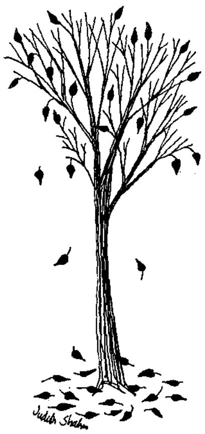
of Guilford; it apparently doesn't include names and addresses," and that "anyone seeking to use the map to find people who have or had cancer would have to knock on doors in the area of the dots on the map and ask such people to identify themselves." After observing that "the health department undermined its own rationale by displaying the map at the public hearing in Guilford in the first place," the editorial concluded by stating that if the department failed to make the map available "the public will have to assume that the department wants to protect something else more than it wants to protect public health."



In September, a reporter for the New Haven *Register* obtained a copy of the map from an assistant to the Guilford health officer. (The assistant later said that she had given it out by mistake.) The *Register* reporter also went to the Connecticut Light & Power Company's office in Madison and obtained a company map of the routes of existing high-current and high-voltage distribution lines in Guilford. On October 3rd, the *Register* published its own map—one combining the locations of the brain tumors and other central-nervous-system tumors with the routes of Connecticut Light & Power's distribution lines. It clearly showed that Hemstock's observation was correct—that an inordinately high number of the meningiomas and other brain and central-nervous-system tumors that had occurred in Guilford over the twenty-one-year period between 1968 and 1988 had developed in people living close to primary distribution wires.

This correlation notwithstanding, Brown and Geschwind denied that the map furnished any evidence of a link between the occurrence of such tumors and proximity to power lines in Guilford. "You can't use the map to show that kind of association," Geschwind told the *Register*. She added that such tumors could be found on streets near main distribution power lines because those streets were densely populated, and heavily populated areas would have proportionally higher cancer rates.

To the contrary, anyone who knows the addresses of the twenty-nine brain-and-other-central-nervous-system-tumor victims in Guilford, and follows the routes of the feeder lines and primary distribution wires leading from the Meadow Street substation, will find not only that there is a strong correlation between the occurrence of these tumors and living close to high-current or high-voltage wires but also that most of the tumors have not occurred in areas of notably dense population. The feeder that carried high current from the substation to Madison and Clinton was abandoned a few years ago; it ran across Meadow Street from the substation and proceeded east for about a mile and a half, to a point near the junction of Stone House Lane, South Union Street, and Sawpit Road. (Up to that point, the poles and the wires of the line remain in place, but they have been removed from the rest of the route—across an uninhabited salt marsh and the East River, which is the eastern boundary of Guilford, to a substation on Garnet Park Road, in Madison.) This feeder line ran for a mile and a half through Guilford, and it passed close—within a hundred and fifty feet or so—to only twelve houses. One of the ten meningiomas and two of the nineteen other brain and central-nervous-system tumors listed by the Tumor Registry as having occurred in Guilford between 1968 and 1988 afflicted people living in three of those twelve dwellings. All three are situated within about forty feet of the high-current wires. Moreover, a former Meadow Street resident who developed eye cancer at the age of forty-four, and has since died of it, lived for fourteen years in one of the twelve houses close to the abandoned feeder line. It is at 56 Meadow, and is situated only about thirty feet from the wires.

Four other feeder lines carry or previously carried high current from the Meadow Street substation to various sections of Guilford. Among them are a pair of thirteen-thousand-eight-hundred-volt lines that run northwest across marshland at the rear of the substation to Water Street, near the West River. (During the past year, spreaders have been placed on these and the other thirteen-thousand-eight-hundred-volt feeder lines, pulling the wires into a close configuration and

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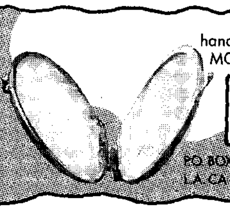

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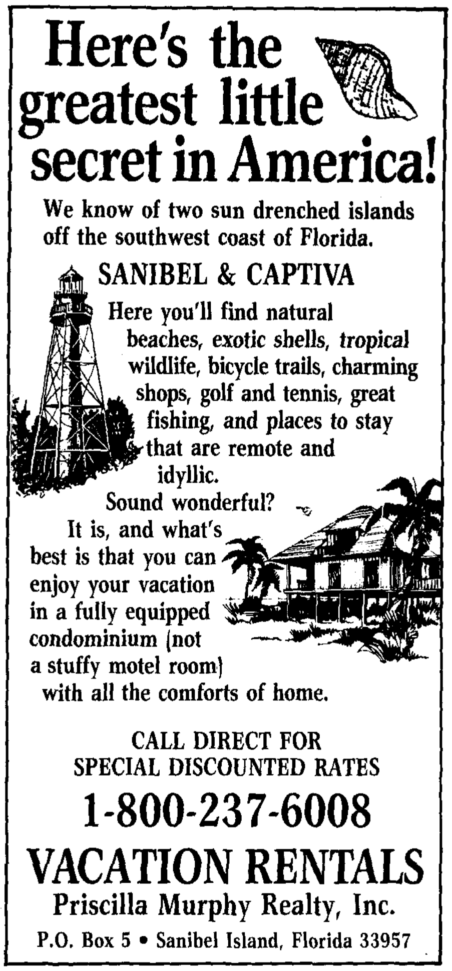
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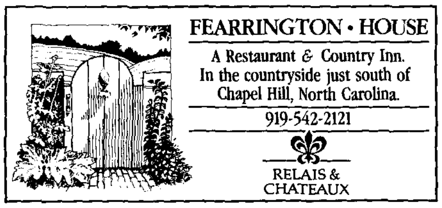
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reducing the magnetic fields that surround them.) One of these lines turns west on Water Street and continues along Leetes Island Road to the Guilford-Branford line. The other runs east along Water Street to Guilford Green, in the center of town; continues east on Boston Street; and then follows the Boston Post Road to the Guilford-Madison line. The combined length of the two lines is about ten and a half miles, and over this distance their high-current wires come within a hundred and fifty feet or so of a hundred and sixty-two houses out of a total of a hundred and seventy-three houses that are visible from the road. One of the nineteen brain and central-nervous-system tumors listed by the Connecticut Tumor Registry occurred in a resident of a dwelling situated within fifty feet of the wires.

At the southeast corner of Guilford Green, a primary distribution line branches off that feeder line and runs north along State Street, north on Nut Plains Road, and northeast on North Madison Road, to the Guilford-Madison boundary. This line is about five and a half miles long and passes within a hundred and fifty feet of a hundred and seventy-two out of a total of a hundred and seventy-nine houses. Another of the nineteen tumors occurred in a resident of a dwelling close to the wires.

A third thirteen-thousand-eight-hundred-volt feeder line runs north from the substation along Meadow Street and across Water Street. It continues north along River Street and then follows the Boston Post Road in a northwesterly direction to the Guilford–North Branford line. The length of this line is almost four miles. Along its distance, it passes within a hundred and fifty feet of eighty-two houses out of a total of ninety-four houses that are visible from the roadway. None of the meningiomas or other brain and central-nervous-system tumors listed by the Tumor Registry occurred in residents of these dwellings.

The fourth feeder line—this one carrying twenty-seven thousand six hundred volts—follows the same route from the Meadow Street substation to the junction of the Boston Post Road and Long Hill Road. It then runs north along Long Hill Road to Hubbard Road, and there delivers current to a paper-coating factory that employs some two hundred workers. A continu-

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ation of this line carries thirteen thousand eight hundred volts north along Long Hill Road to Bullard Drive. The total length of the line from the Meadow Street substation is slightly more than five and a half miles, and over that distance it passes within a hundred and fifty feet of a hundred and thirty-four out of a total of a hundred and sixty dwellings. Including the tumors on Meadow Street, five of the ten meningiomas and one of the nineteen other brain and central-nervous-system tumors listed by the Registry have afflicted people living in houses close to this line.

Branch lines carrying high current from some of the feeders originating at the Meadow Street substation should also be considered in an analysis of the association between the development of such tumors and the proximity of residences to main distribution power lines in Guilford. One such branch leaves the line on Long Hill Road, runs northeast on Flat Meadow Road, and then follows Durham Road (Route 77) to the north for a mile and to the south for about a mile and a half. The length of this line is approximately three miles, and it passes within a hundred and fifty feet of fifty-one out of a total of fifty-four houses. Two of the nineteen brain and other central-nervous-system tumors developed in residents of houses close to this line. Another branch runs east from River Street along the Boston Post Road for about two miles. It passes close to many places of business in the center of Guilford but close to fewer than a dozen residences, and no meningiomas or other brain tumors are reported by the Registry as having occurred among people living along its route.

In addition to the five feeder lines carrying high current from the Meadow Street substation, a main distribution line originating at a substation in North Madison runs west into Guilford along Route 80 and then south on Flat Iron Road to Edgehill Road. The total length of this line in Guilford is about five miles, and over that distance it passes within a hundred and fifty feet of seventy-three out of a total of ninety-eight dwellings. Two of the nineteen brain and other central-nervous-system tumors have occurred in residents of houses close to the wires.

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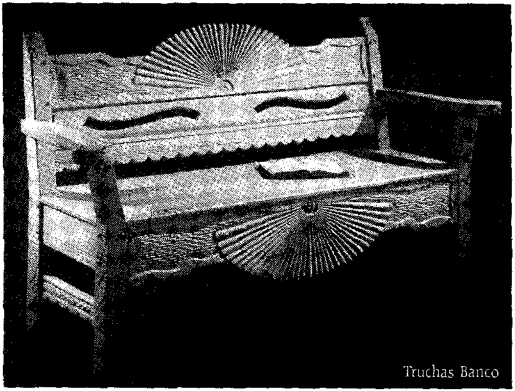

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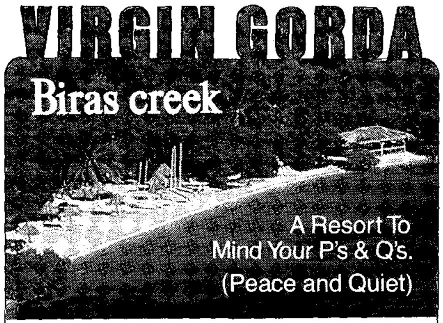
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substation in Branford and run east through Guilford for about three miles. One of these lines was abandoned a few years ago, but the two others still supply voltage to the Meadow Street substation. These lines pass close to fewer than a dozen houses in Guilford, and no cases of brain tumor among their residents have been reported by the Registry. A fourth transmission line, carrying a hundred and fifteen thousand volts, comes from the same substation, crosses Guilford from west to east, and supplies voltage to substations in Madison and Old Saybrook. This line gives off strong magnetic fields, but since it runs cross-country for most of its five-mile length in Guilford there are only about a dozen houses situated close to it. Nevertheless, a resident of a dwelling about seventy-five feet from the line has developed an astrocytoma—a malignant brain tumor—and the resident of another house near the line developed a meningioma.

All told, seven of the ten meningiomas and ten of the nineteen other brain and central-nervous-system tumors—that is, seventeen of the total of twenty-nine—have afflicted people living near high-current or high-voltage power lines in Guilford. The total combined length of the lines is about forty-five miles, and along this distance some seven hundred and twenty-two out of a total of eight hundred and six houses are situated within a hundred and fifty feet of the wires. It seems obvious that in a town of seventy-three hundred dwellings the occurrence of this proportion of meningiomas and other brain and central-nervous-system tumors in residents of just over eight hundred dwellings strung out along some forty-five miles of roadway cannot be ascribed to heavy population—as the Connecticut Department of Health Services has done. It also seems obvious that people living in houses close to high-current wires and high-voltage transmission lines in Guilford are especially susceptible to developing meningiomas and other brain tumors. Particularly disturbing in this regard is the fact that in March of 1989—too late to be counted among the twenty-nine tumors listed by the Registry on the map that the Connecticut Department of Health Services displayed to reassure the townspeople of Guilford—a seventeen-year-old girl living in a house close to one of the high-current feeder lines was found to be suffering from an astrocytoma, the same type of malignant brain tumor that has afflicted a seventeen-year-old girl living near the same line on Meadow Street.

Instead of continuing to extend the presumption of benignity to power-line magnetic fields, the Connecticut Department of Health Services could require its Division of Environmental Epidemiology and Occupational Health to conduct a thorough study of the apparent strong association between the occurrence of meningiomas and other brain and central-nervous-system tumors, on the one hand, and, on the other, chronic exposure to the magnetic fields given off by high-current and high-voltage power lines in Guilford. Moreover, since Connecticut is one of the few states that have collected data on the occurrence of such tumors over a significant period, the department has a unique opportunity to perform an important service for public health nationwide by conducting a detailed investigation of the seventeen hundred and three meningiomas and the four thousand one hundred and two other brain and central-nervous-system tumors that have been diagnosed among Connecticut residents over the twenty-one years between 1968 and 1988, in order to determine whether, as is clearly the case in Guilford, a disproportionately high percentage of them have developed in people living close to wires giving off strong magnetic fields. If such an association should prevail throughout the state, meningioma and other brain tumors would have to be considered marker diseases for exposure to power-line magnetic fields.

LATER in my article I described a cluster of seven brain cancers that had been reported to have occurred over the past fifteen or twenty years among the residents of Trading Ford and Dukeville—two small communities near Salisbury, in Rowan County, North Carolina—who had either worked at a nearby power-generating plant, owned by the Duke Power Company, or lived in a company village, Dukeville, that was situated close to the plant and adjacent to a large substation and some high-voltage transmission lines giving off strong magnetic fields. I suggested that officials of the North Carolina Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources' environmental-epidemiology section were

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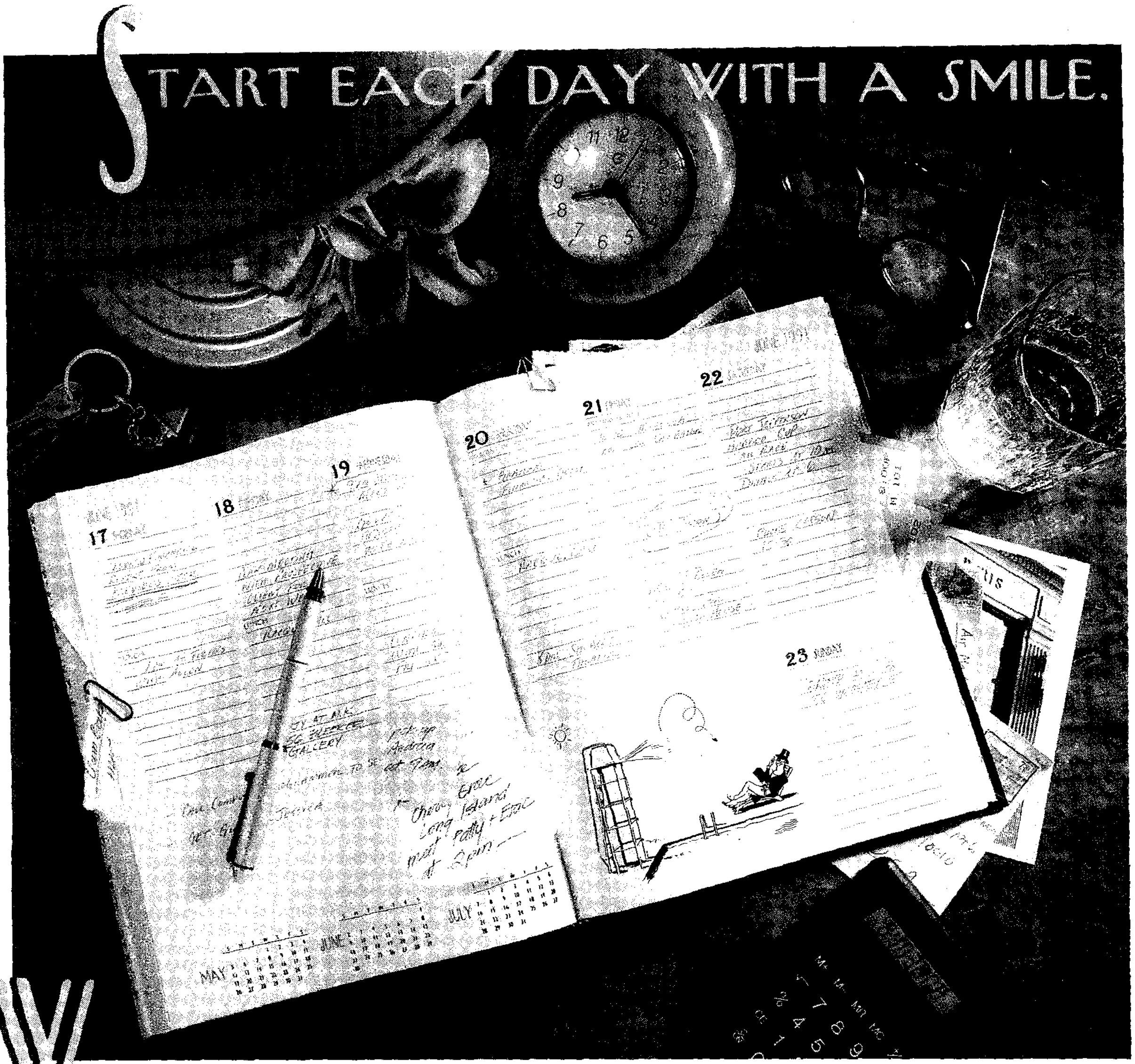

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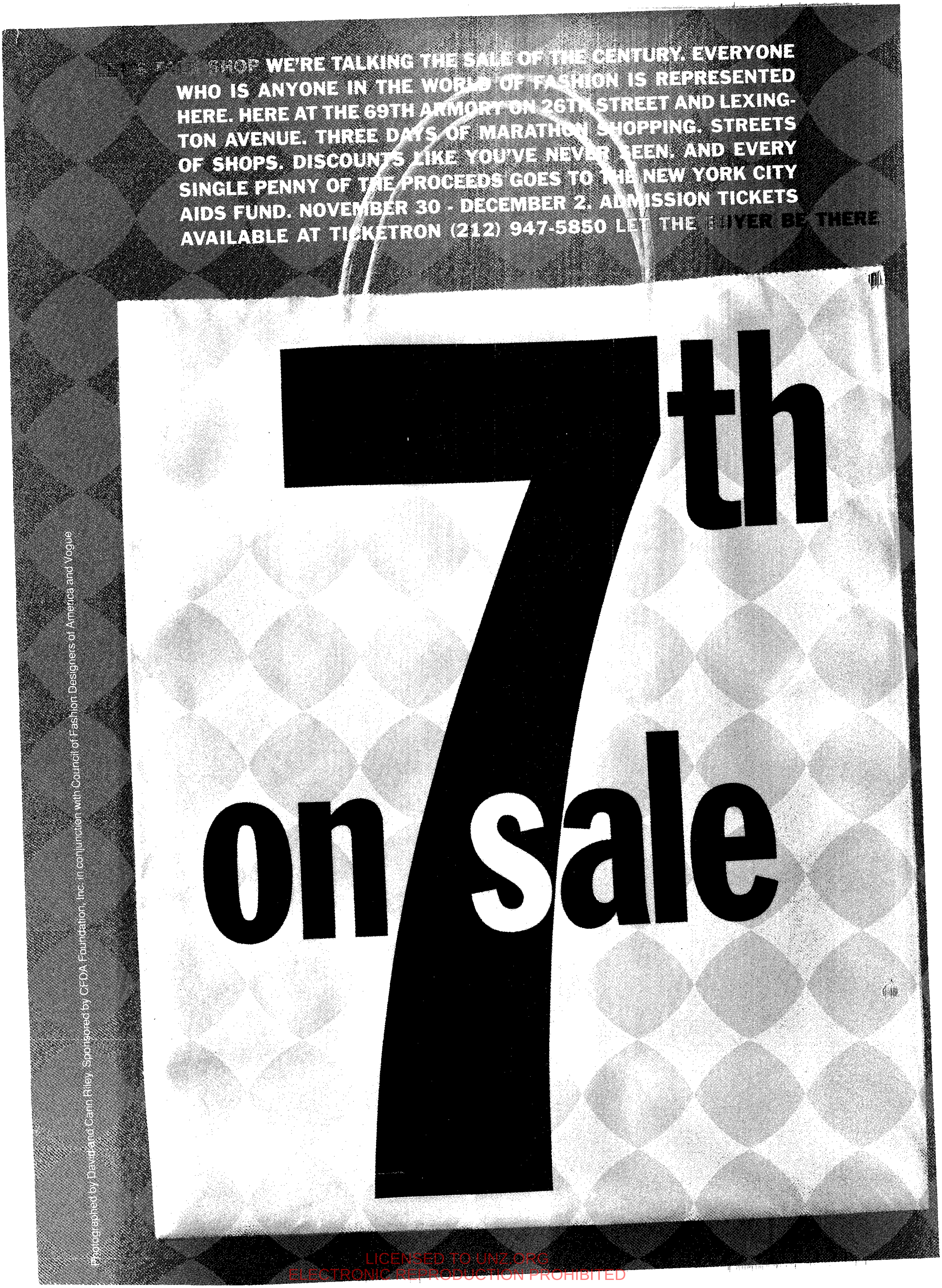

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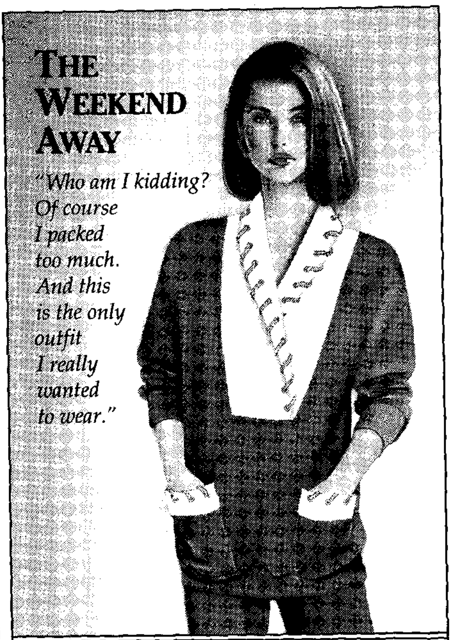
remiss in not having investigated this brain-cancer cluster during the eight and a half months since it was reported in the Salisbury *Post* on July 12 and 18, 1989, especially since one of the officials, Dr. Peter D. Morris, had made a point of stating that such a cluster might be significant if all the cancer victims had worked in the same plant twenty years earlier. I also suggested that the health experience of the three hundred or so people who lived in the company village or worked at the plant, or did both, should be thoroughly investigated, because, in addition to the seven of those people who had died of brain cancer, four others, who simply lived near the plant or the high-voltage transmission lines radiating from it, had died of the disease, and because a preliminary inquiry revealed that there had also been at least eight deaths from leukemia, lymphoma, and other cancers among these people.

In a recent letter to the editor of *The New Yorker* three officials of the environmental-epidemiology section stated that they had evaluated the seven cases of brain cancer, in order to "determine whether or not they should be included in our study of brain cancer in Rowan County from 1980 through 1989," and had found that "two of the seven cases had metastatic brain cancer, a different type of tumor originating in another part of the body and later spreading to the brain." They went on to say that four of the remaining cases were excluded from their study because the diagnoses of two of them were made prior to 1979, an unconfirmed diagnosis of another was made prior to 1979, and one of the victims lived outside Rowan County at the time of diagnosis.

In the final report of their study, which is entitled "Rowan County Brain Cancer Investigation," the North Carolina health officials state that Rowan County did not have a significantly greater incidence of malignant brain cancer between 1980 and 1989 than each of the five surrounding counties. During a press conference at the Rowan County Health Department on October 25th, Dr. Morris told the Salisbury *Post* that brain cancer in the Trading Ford–Dukeville area during the ten-year period "was not studied as a separate cluster."

The rationale of the North Carolina health officials is as faulty as that of their counterparts in Connecticut, because they not only have failed to address the brain-cancer situation in Trading Ford and Dukeville in its entirety but also have submerged the small part they did address in the larger study of Rowan County. In order to understand how flawed their investigation has been, one must remember that the power plant, which was built in 1926, was partly shut down during the nineteen-fifties and sixties, and the eighty-six houses in Dukeville, which were built between 1926 and 1945, were moved elsewhere in 1955. Thus, in addition to the one case of primary brain cancer among Trading Ford and Dukeville residents that the North Carolina officials included in their study, and the four cases of brain cancer that they saw fit to exclude, other people who were exposed to the electric and magnetic fields from the plant, its substation, and its high-voltage transmission lines by virtue of working at the plant or living in the company village during the nineteen-thirties, forties, and fifties may well have developed the disease and died of it before 1979. By deciding not to include brain cancers diagnosed among residents of the Trading Ford–Dukeville area before 1979, the North Carolina health officials decided not to investigate the health experience of people who worked at or lived near the Duke Power Company plant—a decision that makes about as much epidemiological sense as a decision to study the incidence of gray hair in a given population after excluding all those persons in the study group who became gray more than ten years earlier.

STILL later in my article I wrote that cancer among the student population of the Montecito Union School—an elementary school with four hundred pupils in Montecito, California—was "at least a hundred times what might have been expected." This was an error. The incidence of cancer at the school is considerably less than that, though far greater than it should be. Between 1981 and 1988, six cases of cancer are known to have occurred among children who attended the Montecito Union School: two children developed leukemia; three children developed lymphoma; and one child developed testicular cancer. As I wrote in my article, cancer is a rare event in children, occurring annually in about one of ten thousand children per year under the age of fifteen. However, as



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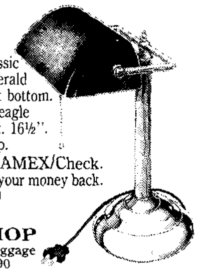

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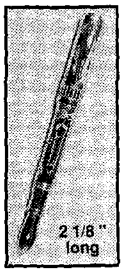

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several readers have pointed out, the child-years at risk should be calculated at eight times four hundred students per year; that comes to thirty-two hundred child-years at risk. Six cases of cancer out of thirty-two hundred child-years translates to 18.75 cases per ten thousand children per year. According to the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) data, the all-sites cancer rate for white children of both sexes, aged five to nine, between 1983 and 1987 in the San Francisco–Oakland area (the closest metropolitan area to Santa Barbara for which SEER data exist) was 11.9 cases per hundred thousand children per year. Thus the cancer rate over those eight years at the Montecito Union School—18.75 cases per ten thousand—is more than fifteen times the expected rate.

In their assessment of this cancer cluster officials of California's Department of Health Services' environmental-epidemiology-and-toxicology branch have maintained that magnetic-field levels at the school—which is situated within forty feet of a sixty-six-thousand-volt feeder line originating at an adjacent substation—were not unusually high, and that there was *no evidence that they posed a health hazard*. The fact is, however, that magnetic-field levels measured at the school's kindergarten patio by Enertech, an engineering consulting firm in the Bay Area, were between four and six milligauss; *that is, approximately* twice the levels that have been associated with a doubling of the expected rate of childhood cancer in three epidemiological studies cited by staff scientists of the Environmental Protection Agency as providing the strongest evidence that there may be a causal relationship between certain forms of childhood cancer—chiefly leukemia, nervous-system cancer, and lymphoma—and exposure to power-line magnetic fields. (Incidentally, on February 26th of this year I measured the magnetic fields at the kindergarten patio of the Montecito Union School, and found them to be about the same as those reported by Enertech.) It is also a fact that the magnetic-field levels at the kindergarten patio are at least equal to, and, for the most part, greater than, the exposure levels of forty-five hundred New York Telephone Company cable splicers, in whom cancer of all types—particularly leukemia—has been found to be higher than expected.

California health officials decided not to include the case of testicular cancer, which occurred in a second-grader, in their assessment of the cancer hazard at the Montecito Union School, and that decision seems arbitrary, in the light of the fact that cancer of all types was elevated in the childhood-cancer studies cited by the E.P.A. and also in the study of the telephone-cable splicers. It seems all the more arbitrary in the light of SEER data that estimate the chances of a seven- or eight-year-old child's developing testicular cancer to be nearly zero in one hundred thousand children per year. Also disturbing is the fact that since the publication of my article a teacher's aide with several years' experience in the kindergarten of the Montecito Union School has developed a brain tumor. This occurrence, together with the fact that four cases of leukemia have been reported among children who attended the Montecito Union School in the late nineteen-fifties, should encourage the California officials to conduct a full-scale investigation of the health experience of all the children who have attended this school during the past thirty-five years, just as the cancer clusters that have been found among the residents of Guilford and Dukeville should occasion in-depth investigations of the health experience of all the people who have lived near high-voltage and high-current power lines in those communities over a similarly appropriate period.

While these studies are in progress, interim preventive measures should be undertaken to reduce the magnetic-field exposure of children in hundreds of schools and day-care centers across the nation which have been built perilously close to high-voltage and high-current power lines. That can be accomplished by rerouting such lines, or burying them in a manner that will prevent hazardous magnetic-field emissions. Needless to say, such measures should be supported by the parents of schoolchildren, by members of parent-teacher associations, and by officials of school districts, of city and state health departments, and of the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

—PAUL BRODEUR

BOOKS

A Reader's Companion

PEOPLE who devote their lives to literature often have their first love affairs with the great dead writers, and through a subsequent addiction to what A. S. Byatt calls "the delectable drug of understanding" they graduate to a consuming romance with anguage, in comparison with which other forms of pleasure will seem mundane. An excellent recent novel decribing that romance was Julian Barnes's "Flaubert's Parrot." It was as precious an artifact for the bookish eader as the stuffed bird of its title was for Barnes's narrator, Geoffrey Braithwaite. Braithwaite is the amaeur's amateur. He "hates" Flaubert's professional critics, because they give hemselves such airs of omniscience yet get things so wrong, and he compares iography to a trawling net that lets lip all but a fragment of what it might have captured. "Words came easily to Flaubert but he also saw the underlying inadequacy of the Word," Braithwaite ells us. And he sets an example, if not f humility, then of the humble pose ecoming to biographers, by giving to his own enamored, select, contentious eflections on the Master the form of ootnotes or appendixes to a true life hat can't be written.

Braithwaite also makes a wishful emand for a twenty-year injunction gainst novels set in Oxford or Camridge and a ten-year ban on other niversity fiction—a demand that may ave been aimed in part at Byatt. She is ne of England's most visible literary ons: an authority on Iris Murdoch nd the Romantics; an editor of George Eliot's essays and poetry; a busy television commentator; and a reviewer of ooks. Her leading characters, too, all eem to teach, preach, broadcast, or write, and her novels seethe with the piritual competitiveness and the sublimated lust of university life, which is hat of any cloister. There is probably o one who understands better than Byatt the heart of the "reading woman." Responsive quotation is her preferred form of foreplay. She finds a man's fiction pedestrian and therefore annot love him. A man can seduce her by chastising her taste in modern writers, then lending her his copy of "La Nausée."

Byatt's latest novel, "Possession" (Random House; $22.95), which has just won the Booker Prize, belongs to that genre of ingenious books—by Nabokov, Borges, Fowles, Eco, et al.—in which a scribe or pedant solves an esoteric mystery by threading a labyrinth of clues that an omnipercipient author has laid out for him. Most of these postmodernist literary thrillers descend from "The Purloined Letter," and "Possession" is no exception, although Byatt might have done well to observe the warning of Seneca that Poe posts as an epigraph: "*Nil sapientiae odiosius acumine nimio*," or "Nothing is more hateful to wisdom than too much cunning." "Possession" demands exegesis with the imperiousness of a masterpiece. It isn't one, but it is more heartfelt and more fun to read than "The Name of the Rose," and its prankish verve suggests it was fun to write. The monstrous richness of detail gives you a taste of the tedium and obsessiveness of literary research. "Possession" also represents every biographer's fantasy of a next book: a novel in which one will invent the life, archives, œuvre, and critical canon of a master whose secrets haven't yet been told.

At the core of "Possession" is an epistolary novel whose scattered fragments begin to compose an image of a clandestine love affair between two prolific poets of the last century—the great Randolph Henry Ash, who seems to be modelled on Robert Browning, and Christabel LaMotte, who bears a resemblance both to Emily Dickinson and to Christina Rossetti. This romance nests like a Russian doll within the love story—"a vulgar and a high Romance simultaneously," the narrator calls it—of two sexually bashful modern scholars, Maud Bailey and Roland Mitchell, who are stalking the Ash-LaMotte relationship through "the twists and turns of [its] syntax."

Early in the novel, the scholars discover a cache of letters—"It's both sides. It's everything"—which has been buried for a century in LaMotte's dolls' bed. The letters are as remark-

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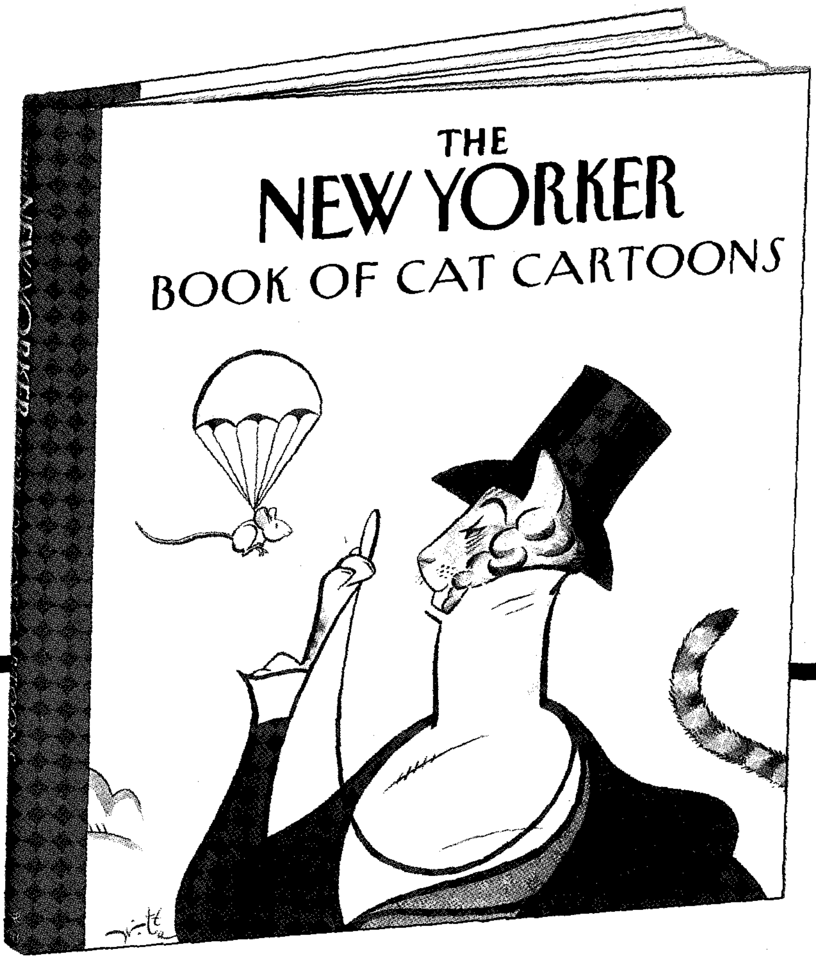

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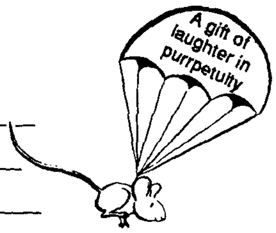
A gift of laughter in purrpetuity

able for Byatt's intuitive reading of he
characters as for her fluency in th
"excited prolixity," the "ambages an
sinuosities," and the pre-Freudian in
nocence of their prose. Ash's greatne
becomes convincing. He's an iconocla
but not, by temperament, a transgres
sor. He is both worldlier and mo
conscientious than his contemporarie
and he sees through LaMotte's terribl
feigned demureness:

> At her worst . . . she would look dow
> and sideways . . . and this smile woul
> come near a mechanical simper, for it wa
> an untruth, it was a convention, it was he
> brief constricted acknowledgement of th
> world's expectations. . . . Most men, h
> judged, if they had seen the harshness an
> fierceness and absolutism, yes, absolutisn
> of that visage, would have stood back fro
> her. She would have been destined to b
> loved only by timid weaklings, who woul
> have secretly hoped she would punish o
> command them, or by simpletons, who su
> posed her chill look of delicate withdraw
> to indicate a kind of female purity, whic
> all desired, in those days, at least osten
> bly. But he had known immediately th
> she was for him . . . or in freedom migl
> have been.

Each poet is the ideal reader of th
other. Their coquetry takes the form o
disagreements on religion, spiritua
ism, history, and the role of gende
and their notion of ecstasy is to be o
one mind. Ash writes:

> I speak to you as I might speak to a
> those who most possess my thoughts—
> Shakespeare, to Thomas Browne, to Jo
> Donne, to John Keats—and find myse
> unpardonably lending you, who are aliv
> my voice, as I habitually lend it to tho
> dead men—Which is much as to say—he
> is an author of Monologues—trying clu
> sily to construct a Dialogue—and e
> croaching on both halves of it.

Christabel later writes:

> I say nothing of Honour, nor of Moral
> ty, though they are weighty matters—I g
> to the Core, which renders much disqui
> tion on these matters superfluous. The co
> is my solitude, my solitude that is threa
> ened, that you threaten, without which
> am nothing.

Eventually, though, she will agr
with Ash's conclusion that "we mu
come to grief and regret anyway—
and I for one would rather regret th
reality than its phantasm, knowledg
than hope, the deed than the hesit
tion, true life and not merely sick
potentialities."

ROLAND MITCHELL has earned
meagre living researching th
footnotes for an edition of Ash's con
plete works. While digging for marg
nalia in Ash's copy of Vico, the gre

proto-Hegelian Renaissance philosopher of science, he discovers two drafts of what seems to be a love letter from Ash to an unidentified woman. One draft is impassioned: "Since our extraordinary conversation I have thought of nothing else." The second has been diluted with propriety: "Since our pleasant and unexpected conversation I have thought of little else." Mitchell, "shocked . . . then . . . thrilled"—there has never been the whisper of an attachment in Ash's life outside his marriage—purloins the letters.

Their trail of allusions leads first to LaMotte and then to Maud Bailey, the poet's descendant and leading critic. Maud is ashamed of her beauty, Roland of his background. He remains a nonentity, while she comes to embody the cerebral excesses and solipsisms of Byatt's style. Here she is, one night, undressing for bed, listening to Roland's ablutions through a thin hotel wall, and—her head full of Lacan's theory of subjectivity—reflecting on her identity: "Narcissism, the unstable self, the fractured ego, Maud thought, who am I? A matrix for a susurration of texts and codes?" And neither she nor Byatt seems dismayed at this predicament. It s only "both a pleasant and an unpleasant idea, this requirement that she think of herself as intermittent and partial."

Maud amplifies what Roland already knows: that LaMotte was the daughter of a famous French mythographer; that she made her life with an obscure painter named Blanche Glover, who committed suicide; and that her work —"disquieting" neo-Gothic fairy tales for children, and an epic, "The Fairy Melusina"—which was neglected in ts own day, has become part of the modern feminist and lesbian canon.

Both scholars pride themselves on an nterest in immortal texts rather than n "vanished bodies": sleeping in the poet's bed or palming his inkwell isn't heir style. Byatt admires their priggishness while indulging their "narrative greed." Where the letters end, the two sleuths proceed on foot. They dust the poets' archives and texts or prints of the affair, and of its aftermath. Using the poetry as their treaure map, they tramp through Brittany, where LaMotte spent an undocumented nine months, and through Yorkhire, where Ash went with a scalpel and a microscope to study sea anemones and to search for "the origins of life and the nature of generation." They must also evade rival scholars who begin closing in on them: Mortimer Cropper, the fastidious and perverse American biographer of Ash, who, with his millions, has cornered the market in Ash artifacts and manuscripts; the flamboyant Leonora Stern, a bisexual, part-Indian LaMotte specialist from Tallahassee; and James Blackadder, the overscrupulous Scot, who has been editing Ash's complete works for forty years. In a scene that resembles the finale of "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" with a commentary by Julia Kristeva, several carloads of pedants from both sides of the Atlantic converge upon a country graveyard, with raincoats and shovels, to exhume Ash's remains.

Barnes's method was to exhibit the biographer's net with all its holes. Byatt's is to simulate the oceanic slosh. The reader is given a stiff final exam in critical sifting and selection. We thus have at our disposal not only epigrams and stanzas but page after page of "Ragnarök," "Swammerdam," "Ask to Embla," "Mummy Possest," "The Incarcerated Sorceress," and "The Garden of Proserpina," all of which are epics or dramatic monologues by Ash; entire chapters from LaMotte's "Tales for Innocents," and the proem, with Book I, of her "Melusina"; generous extracts from the public correspondence of both lovers in addition to the cache of secret letters; weeks from the diaries of Ash's wife, Ellen, and LaMotte's companion, Blanche Glover; the forty-five-page journal of LaMotte's teen-age cousin Sabine de Kercoz, translated from the French; lengthy quotations from the memoir of a Victorian psychic patronized by LaMotte and despised by Ash; and substantial segments of "The Great Ventriloquist," Cropper's biography, and of Leonora Stern's feminist-Lacanian ravings on LaMotte.

"Possession" is so enormous that it can't be maneuvered into the studio apartment of a review without a great deal of grunting and swearing—and of metaphor. It's a Niagara of allusions. It's a rope of pearls grossly disparate in lustre and value. It's a one-woman variety show of literary styles and types. It's a high-tech handbook of professional thought tools adapted for the consumer. It's one of those de-luxe

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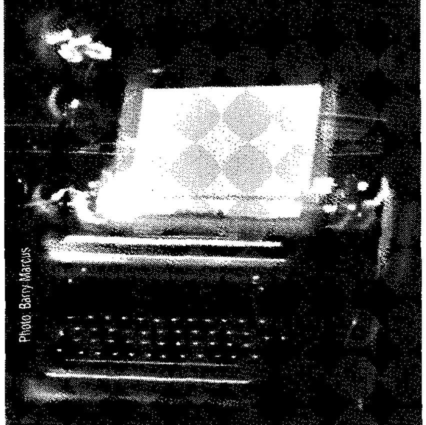

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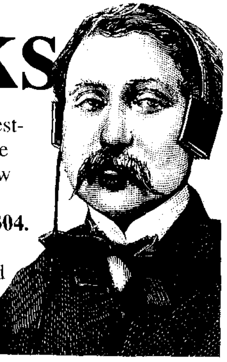

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museum shops which hang real art o the walls and sell cheap bric-a-brac costly replicas, esoteric puzzles, popula histories, the perfect watch, the pe that writes upside down, protest art Zen calendars, and Currier & Ive placemats. You search for the artisti reason for so much pastiche, when hal would have been twice as beguiling The long poems, in particular, seem t exist in such plenitude mainly to b admired as the feat of mischief, erudition, virtuosity, and "ventriloquism which indeed they are:

Three Ases wandered out from Ida plain
Where the Gods met in council, with clea
brows
And joyous voices, knowing then no weigh
Of sin, or the world's wryness. All wa
gleam
Of sun and moon well-wrought, and gold
en trees
With golden apples inside golden walls.
They stepped into the middle-garden
made
For men not made, drowsed in the lap o
Time.

Round their divine bright faces, ceaselessl
Rushed the new air. Beneath their lovel
feet
Rose the new grass, and leeks, untouche
uncropped
Green with the living Sap of that firs
Spring.

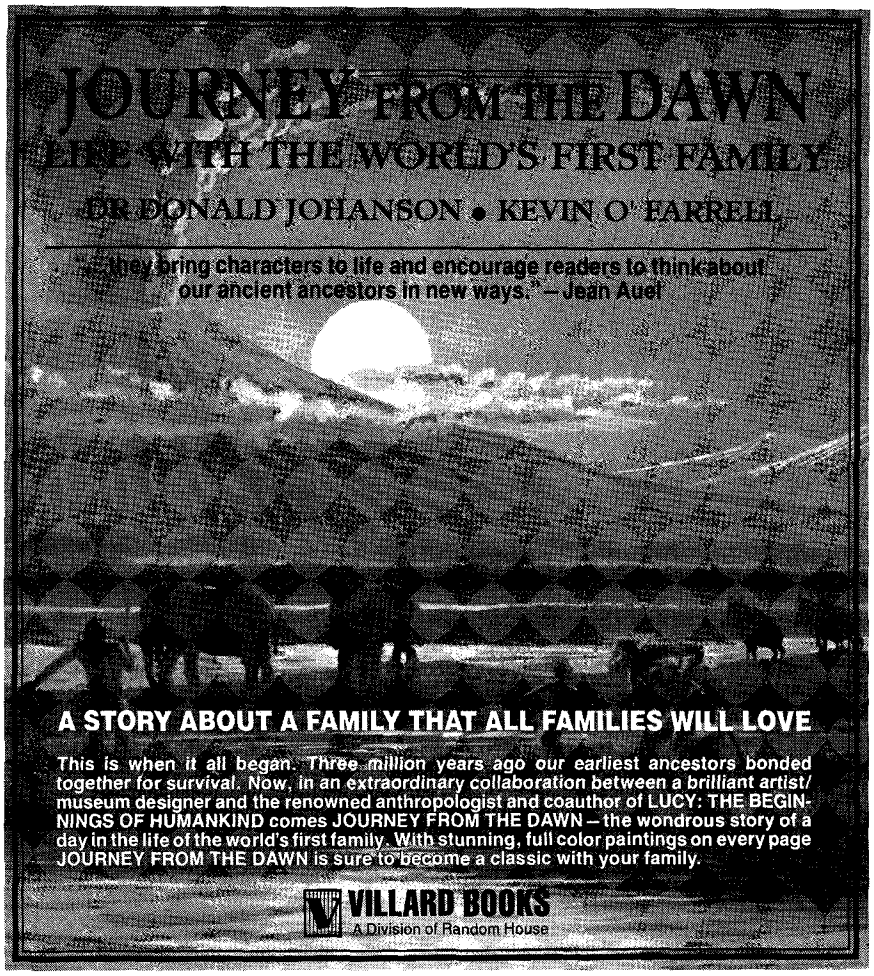
They came down to the shore
Where the salt breakers fell on the ne
sand
With roar unheard, and curling crest u
seen
Like nothing else, for no man-mind wa
there
To name, or liken them, in any way.
They were themselves alone, and rose an
fell
Changing-eternal, new, not knowing tim
Which their succession measures for th
mind.

And these three Ases were the sons
Bor . . .

BYATT treats other people's car with a terrific glee one cannot hel sharing. Here is Leonora, writing t Maud:

> When I last wrote . . . I mentioned might write something on water and mil and amniotic fluid in Melusina—why water always seen as the female? . . . want to write a big piece on the undin and nixies and melusinas—women pe ceived as dangerous—what do you think I could extend it to the Drowned City—With special reference to non-genital i agery for female sexuality—we need to g away from the cunt as well as the phall—the drowned women in the city migh represent the totality of the female body an erogenous zone if the circumambien fluid were seen as an undifferentiated ero icism.

On the other hand, Byatt's own pe



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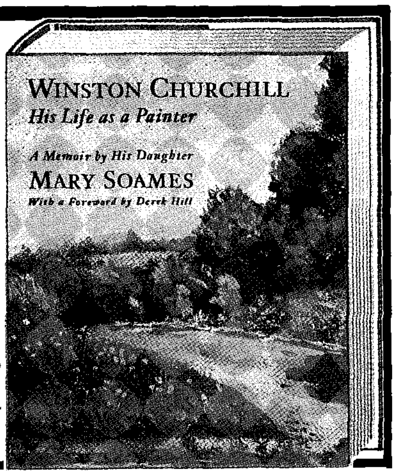

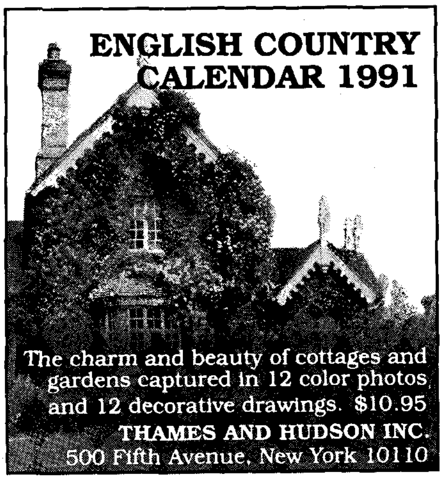

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ntry can be breathtaking. So heavily stocked is the trout pond with paradigms for her enterprise that the fishing isn't much fun. She points out every implicit dialectic. She expropriates every possible response, including exasperation at her own "polysemous perversity." Had it occurred to you that "the banal and the truly profound run thick and fast upon each other here"? Had you noticed the ambiguous relation between an original and its "simulacrum"? Is not the degree to which "literary critics make natural detectives" remarkable? Then you know "the theory that the classic detective story arose with the classic adultery novel—everyone wanted to know who was the Father, what was the origin, what is the secret."

The modern politics of knowledge forces academic writers to develop strategies for placing themselves beyond criticism. The trick, apparently, is to deconstruct one's own text defensively rather than surrender any fertile passage to an invading analyst. Roland asks himself:

> Might there not professionally . . . be an element of superstitious dread in any self-reflexive, inturned postmodernist mirror-game or plot-coil that recognises that it has got out of hand? That recognises that connections proliferate apparently at random, apparently in response to some ferocious ordering principle, which would . . . require the aleatory or the multivalent or the "free," but structuring, but controlling, but driving, to some—to what?—end. Coherence and closure are deep human desires that are presently unfashionable. But they are always both frightening and enchantingly desirable. "Falling in love," characteristically, combs the appearances of the world, and of the particular lover's history, out of a random tangle and into a coherent plot. Roland was troubled by the idea that the opposite might be true. Finding themselves in a plot, they might suppose it appropriate to behave as though it was that sort of plot. And that would be to compromise some kind of integrity they had set out with.

THE don and the novelist have been cast as sibling rivals in Byatt's fiction, and the artist and the didact within Byatt seem to compete for possession of her work. Toward the end of the novel, Roland sheds some light on this conflict. He suddenly finds that he can write poetry, and he sees that he has been taught, and has accepted, that "language was essentially inadequate, that it could never speak what was there, that it only spoke itself." Now, though, the ways "in which it *could* be said had become more interesting than the idea that it could not."

Isak Dinesen once remarked that a hostess wants only to be thanked, and perhaps one can say that a writer wants "only" to be read—by the man or woman best suited by temperament, education, and experience to meet all the "twists and turns of his syntax" with understanding. But the ideal reader deserves a particular kind of reciprocity. Byatt wants to prove that she can write anything and everything, and nearly succeeds. Now she needs to abandon her unreadability—her pedantic insistence that we savor the minutiae, the ironies, and the heroics of her struggle with all that can't be said.

"Possession" is called "A Romance," and to explain her subtitle Byatt refers us to Hawthorne's definition: a tale with greater latitude than a novel, "both as to its fashion and material," and one that attempts "to connect a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us." But "Possession" also wants to be a less theoretical sort of romance. It is one of Eco's humble scribes—Adso—who reminds us that *amor est magis cognitivus quam cognitio:* that we know better through love than through knowledge. What is finest in "Possession" isn't what the didact tells us about language but what the artist illuminates about those, including herself, who love the word.

—JUDITH THURMAN

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

A GOOD BABY, by Leon Rooke (Knopf; $19.95). "Riveting" is the word you will find in ads for this book, and it is—from the first pages, in which a man is planning to murder his pregnant girlfriend after one last go with her in his car. The girlfriend manages to give birth before she dies, and the baby is shunted about in a sack, laid naked on the November ground, ravaged by ticks and mites, and fed jam and Dr Pepper, if anything at all, by the hillbilly who happens to find her, and who, among other things, doesn't want to wash her: "Was he its mama?" Nor, however, does he want to give her up: "She radiates a certain power." This is a celestial baby—maybe a female Jesus?—and her father, the personification of evil,

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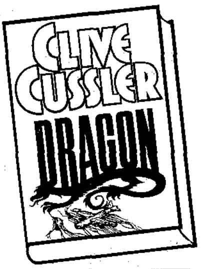

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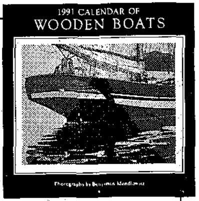

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may be Satan, but then again may be, as he sometimes seems to think, God. "Fuliginous," "permutable," "glairy," "tortile," and "corpsy-eyed" are a few of the adjectives one is treated to while locked inside the minds of Toker, Truman, and Lena. The book might read as an inadvertent sendup—of parables, of the Southern Gothic novel—if not for the insane intensity of language.

THE DISTANT FRIEND, by Claude Roy, translated from the French by Hugh A. Harter, with an introduction by Jack Kolbert (Holmes & Meier; $19.95). Claude Roy is a writer of distinction in France, but he is not well known here, and this novel comes to us through the publisher's French Expressions, a series of fictional works in translation. An elderly Frenchman who has never ventured far from his comfortable estate in the Bordeaux area recalls the one great and continuing event in his life—his friendship, beginning in boyhood, with a young Jewish refugee from Hitler's Germany. They are separated in the autumn of 1939, when the Jewish boy flees with his family to Argentina. The two continue their friendship by mail, and meet occasionally in France after the war, even when the Jewish boy, who has become an internationally famous legal scholar, moves into circles denied to the Frenchman. M. Roy writes with classic French lucidity, and with a firmness of hand that serves equally well in depicting the warmth of friendship, in expressing the two friends' exchange of ideas, and in detailing Argentine politics, in which the distant friend is involved. M. Roy's is an acquaintance worth making.

NOTE: "Lucy," a novel by Jamaica Kincaid, has been published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux ($16.95). All the contents originally appeared in *The New Yorker*. . . . "The Tales of Arturo Vivante," edited by Mary Kinzie, has been published by Sheep Meadow Press ($24.95 cloth, $15.95 paper). Many of the stories first appeared here.

GENERAL

PLEDGING ALLEGIANCE: THE LAST CAMPAIGN OF THE COLD WAR, by Sidney Blumenthal (Harper/Collins; $22.95). The author, an editor of *The New Republic*, opens by arguing that the Cold War allowed America's right wing to define reaction as patriotism and to stigmatize programs for reform as subversive. His account of the Presidential election of 1988 argues, further, that both parties failed in their duty to lead because neither Bush nor Dukakis (and none of the men they defeated in the primaries) admitted that Reagan and Gorbachev had ended the Cold War, and neither attempted to rethink America's role in the world. Mr. Blumenthal's disparagement of all our political personalities is caricature—polemic rather than history or journalism—and his book is longer on commentary than on information, but his lively writing provides entertainment, and even a little excitement.

TO WIT: SKIN AND BONES OF COMEDY, by Penelope Gilliatt (Scribners; $24.95). A shrewd, learned, but light-handed study of comedy—onstage, in the cinema, on television, and in the circus. The author examines a large gallery of funny men (and one or two women), singling out certain geniuses of funniness—Buster Keaton, Jacques Tati, John Cleese—for extended and loving attention. Her book encompasses comedy of every variety: political satire (Brecht, Stanley Kubrick), pratfall and slapstick (Keaton, Harry Langdon), polite comedy (Noël Coward, Oscar Wilde), and the comedy of assault (Lenny Bruce, Mort Sahl). She has a gift for evoking memorable comic performances, and perceptive things to say about the art and poetry that went into the making of them; her recapturing of a rehearsal she witnessed of "A Countess from Hong Kong," with the pedagogical director, Charlie Chaplin, giving advanced instruction to his apt and obedient pupil, Marlon Brando, on the niceties of their craft, is a marvel. Small portions of the book first appeared in this magazine. Photographs.

•

Q. "HOW DID 'Puss' come to be a nickname for a cat?"

A. John James Audubon ate robins. A few.

—*"The Grab Bag," a column in the San Francisco Chronicle.*

Next question.

DEWAR'S PROFILE:

KRIS KRINGLE

HOME: The North Pole.

AGE: Ageless.

PROFESSION: President and CEO, World Gift Distribution Network.

HOBBY: "When you only work one day a year, you need a lot of 'em."

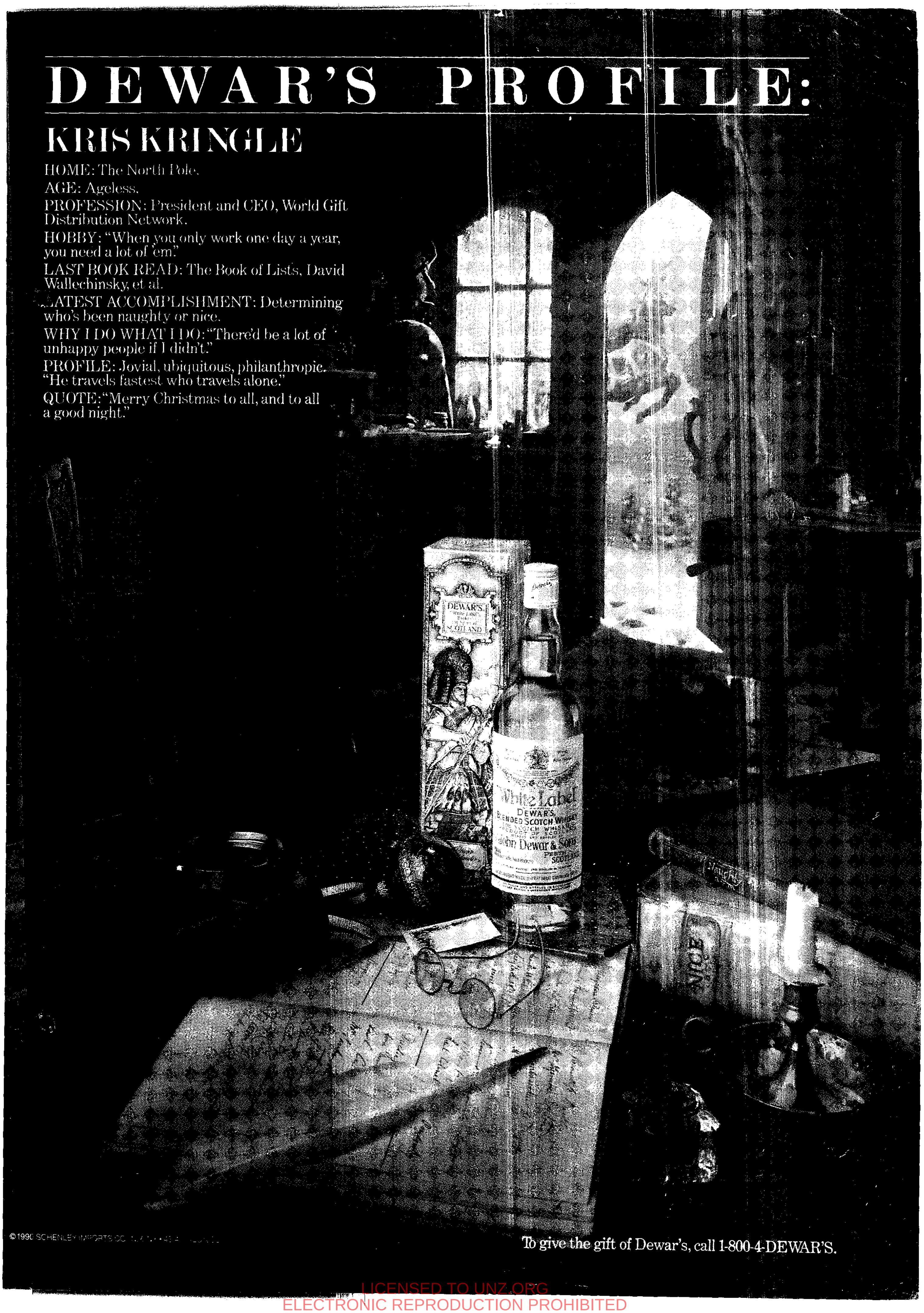
LAST BOOK READ: The Book of Lists, David Wallechinsky, et al.

LATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT: Determining who's been naughty or nice.

WHY I DO WHAT I DO: "There'd be a lot of unhappy people if I didn't."

PROFILE: Jovial, ubiquitous, philanthropic. "He travels fastest who travels alone."

QUOTE: "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night."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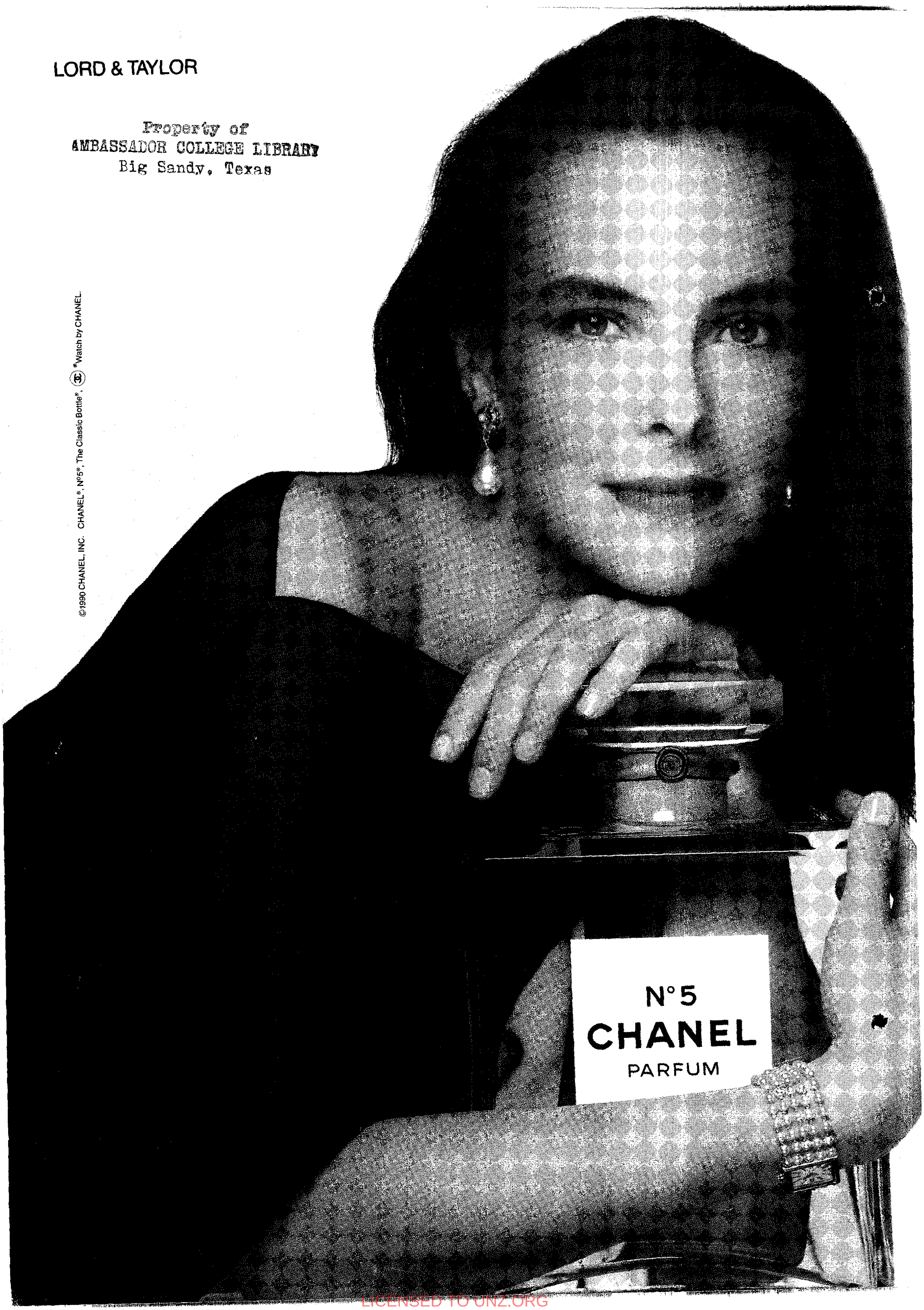
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